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Art, Movement and the Body: An Art-Based Research Exploration of Slow, Gentle, and Repetitive Painting Movements

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ART, MOVEMENT AND THE BODY: AN ART-BASED RESEARCH EXPLORATION OF SLOW, GENTLE, AND REPETITIVE PAINTING MOVEMENTS

A DISSERTATION

(submitted by)

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Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

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Abstract

Art-based research explored the effects of using slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements paired with pauses during this painting process. Five participants completed four painting sessions that were filmed; sessions consisted of painting with acrylic paints on canvas or Bristol board and reflective writing. Embodied response paintings were created by myself in response to participant paintings. A reflective research process consisting of documentation, reflection, and examination, was used to help in the materialization of outcomes. The inquiry yielded the following outcomes: it was challenging to paint slowly, there was an increase in connection to present moment awareness and immersion, a meditative painting state was induced, there was an increased connection to self and embodiment, the role of the witness and being witnessed was significant, and the refinement of methods allowed for an accurate exploration of the art-based inquiry.

Keywords: art-based research, art therapy, embodiment, gentle, meditative, mindfulness, repetitive, slow, witness

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This research is rooted in my personal use of repetitive movements in art making and the use of these movements by my clients. In a review of the literature, there was limited research that focused on specific movement sequences used in art making and limited research that focused on the body in connection to art making. There is a need to further explore specific movement sequences in artmaking to determine what impacts they can have on the creator. Additionally, the body is an integral component of artmaking and needs more attention by the field of art therapy. The lack of literature and need for research has fueled my passion for exploring specific movement sequences in artmaking and what effects they have on the creator.

In the pilot, I studied heartfelt and repetitive movements and their impact on well-being and had an increase in sensory and perceptual awareness, present immersion, and an increase in connection to the present moment. In reviewing this research and methodology with my advisor, we discussed a salient brushstroke in my final pilot video. It was a slow, gentle, and repetitive painting brushstroke with yellow paint on canvas. It was a mesmerizing stroke; I can see it in my mind as I am writing this introduction. The bristles of the brush hugged the canvas and I could see individual bristles applying yellow paint into the nooks and crannies of the canvas. It was breathtaking, sensory stimulating, and needed to be researched more fully in this dissertation. It combined my love for movement with creating, involved the whole body, and the stroke was slow, gentle, and repetitive. When looking to the paintings that I have historically created, they have involved similar strokes and my “go to” painting movement was repetition. Whenever I picked up a brush and had no agenda, the strokes were repetitive, it was and is something that I know my body needs to help regulate and release. My clients were also using these types of

movements in sessions to help release and regulate. This type of movement sequence paralleled my experience with distance running and using slow, gentle, and repetitive, strides.

The use of the pause was also significant in my pilot research. Using these types of movements required pauses to help with assimilation and provided a moment to breathe and be with the painting. Thus, exploring the specific movement sequence of slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements and the pause became the focus of this research. It is my hope that future studies will explore alternate movement sequences.

In using these types of movements, the participants reported it was challenging to paint slowly, an increase in connection to present moment awareness and immersion, a meditative painting state was induced, there was an increased connection to self and embodiment, the role of the witness and being witnessed was significant, and the refinement of methods allowed for an accurate exploration of the art-based inquiry. This type of movement sequence mirrors the natural and repetitive rhythms of the body like the heart beating, the rise and fall of the lungs breathing, and the messages firing in the nervous system. When one is engaged in painting with slow, gentle, and repetitive movements, they are engaged with a sensory, contemplative process that is a physical way to release tension and discomfort from the body and to restore rhythm and energetic flow in the body. That said, it is important to move with natural movements in artmaking and this research is not necessarily about prescribing a specific movement sequence. Additional research is warranted to have a more complete understanding of how these movements impact the body but this is a starting point. This research is work of my soul and I am hopeful will bring healing to many and influence the way we view art making, movement, and the body. We need more research that looks to healing methods that impact the body in general but it is especially warranted in the field of art therapy.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Pilot Research

Using art-based research, heartfelt and repetitive movements in artmaking were explored to determine if they could impact well-being. Additionally, the pause generated by these movements was explored. It was found that the specific movement sequences of an extension and return, along with a gentle blending of paints, and a pause, were the most significant and repeating movement sequences to emerge. These movement sequences were present in every artmaking session and appeared organically. I benefited from an increase in perceptual and sensory awareness, present immersion, and had an increase in connection to the present moment.

In conducting a pilot research study prior to the dissertation, I was able to begin to refine research methods for the dissertation. As such, I withdrew the word heartfelt and focused on slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements in the dissertation. For the purposes of the pilot research, *heartfelt* was defined as a deep or strongly felt bodily knowing, opening, and connecting. It was suggested that heartfelt may have been imposed on the study and I wanted to see if it organically emerged or not in the dissertation. To explore the inquiry, I used acrylic paints on canvas. I chose acrylic paints because of their fluidity (Kagin, 1969), they are fast drying, and are a relatively easy clean-up and chose canvas because acrylic paint adheres nicely to canvas. Additionally, the slow and gentle movements emerged as prominent in the pilot research. I was interested in exploring these types of movements in a sustained, repetitive manner in the dissertation which focused on slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements, future studies may explore other types of movements. An exploration of specific types of movements and their connections to art making begins this critical review of the literature.

Overview of Movements

Movement is at the root of all expression (McNiff, 2015; Rogers, 1993). Movement generates sensation that manifests into expression through dance, art, song, writing, and many other art forms. We need movement to live, breathe, and survive; it is at the core of our bodies, desires, and the universe. Movement can be used in many ways to process, express, and release. For example, McNiff (2011) and his students use movement as a way to respond to and interpret visual artwork, it is through the body and movement that the meaning of the artwork is realized. Movement is manifested by energy and is not possible without a shift in energy. A closer look at the energetic roots of movement is outlined below.

Energy, Movement, and Creativity

Ch'i. Energy is the fuel for movement and is constantly shifting, it never settles, and cannot be created or destroyed. An Eastern perspective on energy is that there is a life force energy behind all movement, this life force energy is called *ch'i*. It is a vital force, constantly moving, powerful, and is present in all things (Wei-Ming, 1993; Yun, 2012). It can present itself in physical form or in a non-physical form, it is the Eastern representation of how the West views the soul of the body. It is present in creative expression; as one creates, ch'i moves from creator to object and vice versa. There is a constant movement and flow with ch'i; when one is connected with ch'i, creations will emerge with ease and will form shapes and objects that will pour out of an individual without conscious control. In order to wholly engage with ch'i in creative practice, one must move organically and relax into the movements of the body and brush, while quieting the mind and breath. When there is a blockage in the body or mind, ch'i will lead the creator to release the blocked energy through creative expression and restore the natural flow of energy in the body (Levine, 1997; McNiff, 2016).

There are several movement practices that engage ch'i paired with specific movements of the body, for instance: the practices of *chigong* and *tai chi chuan* (Kit, 2002; Ni, 1995). The practice of chigong, influences the balance and flow of ch'i through movements of the body, breath work, and elements of meditation, to help with both physical and mental ailments (Ni, 1995). The movements are specific, slow and intentional, breath is deep and rhythmic, and the mind is calm. The movement of ch'i in chigong allows for one to be more connected to body, mind, spirit, and the present moment. The practice is rooted in traditional Chinese medicine and mixed martial arts. The practice of tai chi chuan is a form of ancient Chinese exercise that was originally created as a form of fighting (Ni, 1995). Much like chigong, tai chi chuan uses breath work and movements of the body but is different in that it focuses on a series of movements of the body in a flowing manner and not just one area of the body or one movement in repetition like chigong (Kit, 2002; Ni, 1995). For instance, chigong may focus on using movements to target the lungs specifically if one is struggling with breath; whereas, tai chi chuan is going to use movements of the entire body in a flowing manner to address breath. The principles of tai chi chuan and chigong, such as: the use of the breath and intentional and slow movements, can be applied to artmaking and used while creating. Using these types of movements and a deep connection to the rhythm of the breath can help to bridge connection to the creative source, mindfulness, and has meditative elements. Additionally, the sensory properties of the art media being manipulated can help to deepen the movements and the breath, this deepening can lead to an optimization of the flow of ch'i and connection to wu-wei.

Wu-wei. To optimize the flow of ch'i, the creator engages with the Taoist principle of *wu-wei*, "non-action," or "effortless action," while creating or engaged in a task (Slingerland, 2003). Merton (1965) describes how Chuang Tzu, 370-287, BCE, believed that much emerged

from stillness or “non-doing.” It is in the non-action that action happens and much can emerge from not forcing movement or action but letting it happen naturally and spontaneously (Merton, 1965). Sitting and doing nothing but being fully alive and present is non-action. Being is non-action, it is the greatest form of presence (Hanh, 2014). The practice of wu-wei allows for the creator to embody both mind and body and to connect with *the way* or *tao*, simultaneously, while engaged in a task (Merton, 1965; Slingerland, 2003; Tzu & Johnston, 2016). The concept of tao is rooted in Lao Tzu’s, 601-531, BCE, writings on Chinese philosophy and religion. It is the all-encompassing truth and order of the universe, following tao will lead to abundance and harmony. The fundamental principles of tao, are: non-action, an empty heart or humility, non-duality, and loving kindness (Tzu & Johnston, 2016). When one is engaged in wu-wei, one is connected to tao. A critical review of the differences between wu-wei and flow follows.

Wu-wei versus Flow. Similar to the principle of wu-wei is the Westernized concept of *flow* or the “optimal human experience” that leads to happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When one is engaged in flow they are “in the zone” and have found the “sweet spot.” Csikszentmihalyi first connected with the notion of flow as a doctoral student, he noticed a complete immersion in the creative process of art making as students created paintings. There was a timelessness as the students created, a complete enjoyment and engagement with the process of creating, they did not stop to eat or drink and were fully immersed (Cooper, 1998). Csikszentmihalyi became fascinated with the concept of flow and went on to study it for over half a century, exploring many different activities that people enjoy, such as: art making, listening to or playing music, sports, gaming or technology, work, education and hobbies. For both wu-wei and flow, there is a deep focus on the task at hand, there is an effortlessness, an engagement with one’s

surroundings, great effectiveness, sublime enjoyment, a losing of oneself in the process, and a timelessness attached to the process (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Slingerland, 2014).

Although the concept of wu-wei and flow have similarities, there are some stark differences. For instance, as one continues to engage with a task, whether it is painting, running, archery, or something different, they become more proficient at that task and there is an increase in complexity and challenge as proficiency increases (Slingerland, 2014). The flow state then shifts with the increase in challenge and complexity and there is the Westernized notion of doing more and more and being greater and greater attached to the concept of flow, this is very different than the concept of wu-wei. For example, instead of exploring the running of a 5K race to engage with flow, the runner runs an ultramarathon to engage with flow. Writings on flow typically speak to those that are the best in the world, such as: famous athletes or successful entrepreneurs, implying that if one engages with flow, they can be just like them. Writings do not always talk about the person that is painting alone in an art studio or the mechanic that is working on the engine of a car in a local garage. Writings on flow discuss the best of the best. In the flow state, one is stretched to the limit, it can lead to exhaustion, and it can be a very self-involved process. The concept of wu-wei is not about doing more and more or self-involvement, it is about connecting with all things greater than self and mastering a task as is; whether it is chopping wood or fixing a bike chain, it does not have to be a grand gesture or incredible feat but can be an ordinary task (Slingerland, 2014; Tzu & Johnston, 2016). Furthermore, there is a great deal of literature that looks at the concept of flow and art making but limited literature that explores the concept of ch'i, wu-wei, and art making. It would be wonderful if art therapy training programs would educate future art therapists on the concepts of ch'i and wu-wei. Limited education on these subjects and a focus on the flow state, is to the detriment of future art

therapists, myself included. I did not learn about these concepts until the last couple of years in doing this research. More literature is warranted to better understand the intersection(s) of ch'i, wu-wei, and art making, and their connection(s) to healing. As one connects with wu-wei, the body slows, becomes more focused and intentional with movements, and becomes embodied. A deep form of embodiment involves the concept of the *felt sense* and *focusing*.

Felt sense, Focusing, and Embodiment

The felt sense is a holistic bodily awareness that includes everything one may know or feel at any given moment (Gendlin, 1981b). It is a physical experience, expansive, communicates the whole experience of the body, and is the totality of sensation at any given moment. It involves an embodiment of the viscera. The process of attending and listening to the felt sense in a gentle manner is a concept that Gendlin (1981a) developed called focusing. Focusing allows for one to be with the body deeply, listen to felt messages, and make powerful shifts that foster growth and healing. It involves a slowing down and being in the present moment and connects mind, body, and spirit. It also generates self-compassion, connects with creativity and the authentic self, lowers stress, and informs decision making about life direction (Gendlin, 1981a). Gendlin (2012) emphasized the importance of paying attention, being grounded in the present moment, and having a connection to the felt sense in order to gain meaning through the body. Attending to and being with the felt sense allows for one to feel more grounded in the body, embodied, and allows for one to connect with sensations in a gentle manner that slow the body down. Feeling grounded or grounding, is a way for the body to be supported by the earth and connect with gravity, it is a rooting and connecting point with the earth (Hackney, 2002). The embodied component of the felt sense allows for one to stay in the present moment longer, to

feel and track sensation and energy moving through the body, and allows for one to truly feel alive in those moments (Levine, 2010).

The felt sense is used in many different ways to help to facilitate healing and is embedded in different healing modalities, such as: somatic experiencing, a body-oriented psychotherapy that is used in the treatment of trauma (Levine, 1997). Somatic experiencing consists of resourcing, orienting, accessing the felt sense, completing incomplete responses, and releasing traumatic shock from the body through creating a pendulation of awareness between areas of higher sensory activation to areas of lower sensory activation in the body (Gendlin, 1981a; Levine, 1997). This process of gently shifting attention back and forth, repetitively, can create movement in frozen parts of the body, allowing for shock to be released and the body to reach homeostasis (Levine, 1997). The body holds so much, including: trauma, it is through gentle shifts in attention and accessing the felt sense that healing or felt shifts can occur in the body. Accessing the felt sense is a deep way to connect with the depths of the mind, body, and the soul. It is not always pleasant and can be challenging, one way to safely bridge connection to the felt sense is through connecting with the sensory in the creative process of art making.

Felt Sense, Focusing, and Creativity. Accessing and attending to the felt sense can provide an opening for creative release and expression (Gendlin, 1981b). Rappaport (2009, 2014) combined the concept of focusing with art therapy and developed *focusing-oriented art therapy*, which includes a deep focus on the present moment, grounding, a focusing attitude of kindness, creating, and empathic listening and reflection. The felt sense can be released through creative expression and can be represented in a concrete art form. Creating in this way can cause a “felt shift” or change in the body that can be represented and viewed in the artwork. Engaging

with the felt sense through creative expression helps to ground the body, ground the image created, and ground the image within the body.

Rappaport (2009) has developed a specific step-by-step process in focusing-oriented art therapy to engage with the felt sense through visual creative expression, modeled after Gendlin's six step process used to access the felt sense. Focusing-oriented art therapy involves a clearing of a space to create art, deciding on what to process through the art, creating a handle or symbol, dialoguing with the felt sense and artwork, and being open to receive messages. Accessing the felt sense does not necessarily need to follow this specific step-by-step process; often times while creating, the creator is engaging with the felt sense unknowingly. Connecting with the felt sense can happen quickly in the art making process through grounding or orienting to space, connection to the present moment, and engaging with the sensory. Furthermore, Malchiodi (2018, 2020) believes that art therapy connects with the sensory and an embodied knowing through the exteroceptive senses: visual, olfactory, and tactile, and the interoceptive senses which include proprioception and "gut feelings" or the felt sense. Proprioception helps to increase body awareness and is the ability to connect with bodily position and orientation in space (Hindi, 2012). The process of creating is a sensory stimulating and engaging process that safely connects the creator with the body and the felt sense. Additionally, accessing the felt sense with the creative process of art making involves movements of the body as one creates, these movements allow for a free flow of energy from the body and may become repetitive in nature. Repetitive movements can help to shift energy and have historically been linked to art making. A detailed exploration of repetitive movements and repetitive movements in art making is more fully explored below.

Repetition and Movement

Movements of the body can develop into ritual and are a celebration of expression and creativity, transforming space and time, and in many cases employ the use of repetition (Kane, 1981). Repetition is a repeating movement or gesture of the body, is seen across the arts, and has been shown to induce healing (Sorge, 1999). There is a history of repetition linked to the arts and healing, dating back to archaic healing practices of indigenous cultures across West Africa, South America, North America, Central America, and the Caribbean, that employed the use of cosmogonic myth and meditation (Kossak, 2015; Sorge, 1999). Cosmogonic myth, or creation myth, is a sacred narrative of how the world and existence began. Overall, the use of repetition is a disciplined and contemplative practice that can lead to mastery, it takes one deeper, involves a gentle intimacy, and fosters stillness, awareness, and focus (Franklin, 2017). Repetition begins in the body, a closer look at the body and the repetitive processes that naturally occur follows.

Repetition and the Body. The body runs on repetition and is constantly moving, even when one is sitting, the heart is beating, blood is running through the veins, and the lungs are breathing (Hanh, 2015). Without intentionally moving the body at all, it is moving. When intentionally moving the body, repetitively, the rhythm of repetition involves the whole being and generates vibrations similar to those generated by the heart, lungs, and nervous system (Levine, 1997, 2010). When one is connected to the rhythmic repetition of the nervous system and can feel the pulse generated by the heart, the rise and fall of the lungs, and the buzz of the nervous system, one is connected to the universe and has access to equilibrium and healing (Kossak, 2015). When looking to ways to generate healing, the body holds great knowledge and is communicating the need to use a healing process that consists of repetition or rhythm. The body can be loud and communicate distress but often times it is quietly running on repetition,

with many autonomic processes that are not in conscious awareness. There is great knowing in this repetition that healing practitioners must pay attention to and listen to in order to help others make lasting, healing shifts. One repetitive practice that can assist with healing and connection to the present moment is the use of mantra repetition.

Mantra Repetition. The use of a mantra is a sacred practice that can bring a sense of safety and calmness to the mind and body by repeating sound, gesture, or image (Franklin, 2017). Mantras are repetitive, highly personalized, and a private way to create connection (Bormann & Oman, 2007). Mantra repetition calms or grounds the body and mind, bridges connection between body and mind, improves concentration, provides for highly focused attention, and allows one to slow down and go deeper. A mantra is a word or statement that an individual repeats over and over that facilitates a connection to spirit. Bormann et al. (2009) found that using mantra repetition with veterans diagnosed with PTSD (N = 136) improved PTSD symptoms for 24% of the veterans in the experimental group (n = 70) compared with a 12% improvement of PTSD symptoms for veterans in the control group with no mantra repetition (n = 66). Additionally, depression, quality of life, and being able to connect with spirituality, significantly improved for veterans in the experimental group compared to the control group (Bormann et al., 2009). For the purposes of this study, the mantra was repeated over and over in the mind, I would be curious to know what percentage of veterans would have had an improvement in symptomology had a repeated image or gesture been used as a mantra. I suspect this would have had a greater impact on the veterans as they would have also engaged with the sensory and the felt sense. Furthermore, creating artwork over and over is an art-based form of mantra repetition that leads to increased attunement and depth (Franklin, 2017).

Repetition and Art Making. Repetition has historically been linked to art making; for instance, Macuk (2016) studied repetition in the artworks of abstract expressionists: Jackson Pollock and Gerhard Richter. He saw an energy force translated through repetitive brushstrokes in art making that caused the viewer's eyes to move back and forth across the canvas. This movement was thought to foster an attunement of sorts, generating a calming or slowing down of the viewer's autonomic nervous system and facilitate a connection to the soul. Macuk (2016) also noted that there was a paradoxical quality to repetition in artwork, it either bored or greatly activated an individual. There has also been research conducted with children that have autism that has shown that the children will more closely pay attention and focus on repetitive visual movements as opposed to random visual movements (Wang et al., 2018). The repetitive movements are more engaging and keep the focus of the children longer than the movements that are at random. Following random visual movements could be overstimulating or exhausting and the repetition appeared to foster a calming and rhythm that the children could follow.

Additionally, Kossak (2015) found that repetition in artwork or music connects to rhythm and can induce altered states of awareness. For instance, the repetitive beat of a drum has been used historically to move individuals into a trancelike state, facilitating a connection to self, others, and to the divine or spirit energies (Kossak, 2015). The rhythm not only engages the body but is thought to engage the brain, specifically the left and right hemispheres, creating a pendulation from left to right that can induce a relaxing and opening of the nervous system (Kossak, 2015). Rhythm has been used across cultures and time as a way to connect with the body and express through dance, music, art making, and other forms of expression. Historically, tribal communities have used movements of the body to influence rhythms within the body and within the universe (Chaiklin, 2016). Manipulating the body through movement allowed for one

to connect with the tribe and gave a structure to rituals connected to birth, entering adolescence, marriage, and leaving the physical world. For instance, rhythms used in bodily expression in Afro-Caribbean culture, were a powerful way to communicate, confront oppression and also to celebrate (Hérard-Marshall & Rivera, 2019). There is a repetition in rhythm, that when sustained, is thought to generate shifts in experience and within the body. There are also specific, rhythmic and repetitive movements used in artmaking, such as: the process of *centering*, which is more fully explored in the following section.

***Centering*.** The process of centering is a constant engagement with the present moment, leads to wholeness, and fully engages the body and lungs in breathing. In relation to artmaking, centering involves movements of the body and art media in a manner that may be grounding for the individual and bridge connection to the present moment and emotional, cognitive, and bodily awareness. Richards (1989) noted that creating artwork was a form of centering and facilitated a connection between the visible and invisible. It is a holistic process that one uses to engage with the art media to bring balance and to release from the inside out. Additionally, it involves a sacred focus on artmaking and manipulation of art media in the present moment in a repetitive fashion, which increases connection between body and mind and allows one to access the felt sense. It allows the artist to see and learn with one's hands and heart and is a repetitive engagement with experience in the present moment (Richards, 1989).

Richards (1989) used pottery as a form of centering, the potter's wheel constantly moving, and the clay being manipulated by the hands, brought a quieting to the mind. She prepared her body to create, much like the athlete prepares the body to move, and described art making as an "athletic act" and "physical discipline." There can be discomfort in the process of centering, the mind and body can wander or become tired, but sticking with the repetitive

movements and the present moment can yield mastery and generate healing shifts. Centering can be applied to all forms of visual, creative expression, including: painting, sculpture, drawing, and other forms. These repetitive movements have also been used in different ways across the field of art therapy.

Repetition and Art Therapy. Art therapy is a mental health profession that integrates the creative process of visual art making with counseling and psychological theories to help with healing and growth. It is facilitated by an art therapist that has, at minimum, a master's degree in art therapy (AATA, 2013). Creating artwork requires one to move the body; thus, art therapy uses movements of the body to facilitate healing and growth. Manipulating different art media is inherently grounding, sensory activating, and is a way to shift energy (Isis, 2014; Malchiodi, 2018; Rappaport, 2009). To create a painting, drawing, or object, one can use movements or gestures in a repeated fashion. McNiff (1998) believed that often the experienced artist begins by making a few repeated and unplanned gestures or brush strokes on the canvas and that these marks are significant and hold meaning for the artist. He emphasized the importance of moving the entire body while painting and engaging in repeated gestures. Similar to Richards (1989) preparing her body for creating, McNiff encourages individuals to warm-up and move the body and arms in rhythmic and repeated movements in order to prepare the mind and body for painting. These movements open up the body, get the blood flowing, and allow for a transition to creating artwork. Once the individual is creating, the repetition of a gesture in the creation of artwork helps to release what is no longer serving an individual and to connect with what will serve the individual. As the same gesture or movement of the brush is painted repeatedly, the image often changes and the gesture remains alive.

Furthermore, McNiff (2014) encourages individuals to lose themselves in the repetition, to be curious and attentive to the most basic of movements, and suggests that if boredom enters one is getting closer to release and/or understanding. He also believes that trusting the creative process and tapping into movement is a discipline and does not always come with ease (McNiff, 1998). Painting with a sustained, repeated gesture can lead to boredom, doubting, or questioning the process, but the longer one is engaged with the process, shifts will happen. Sure, it is not always comfortable to repeat a gesture over and over but healing shifts do not happen in the comfortable, it is in the discomfort that transformation occurs. The simplicity of a repeated movement can also generate depth. Furthermore, when the focus and attention is on the rhythm and repetition of the brushstroke, the mind is quieted, and a trancelike state can be induced (Kossak, 2015). The body is awakened and can release or bring new meaning to what may have been dormant or blocked. Repetitive painting movements can cause shifts, generate new levels of expression and integration, and allow for one to connect with spontaneity and the present moment.

Tripp (2007, 2016) also encourages the use of repeating movements in artmaking, specifically to help in the remediation of trauma. She believes that art therapy is an expressive modality that engages both the mind and the body, and allows for an individual to quickly access stored traumatic memories while remaining mindfully engaged in the present moment. The process of creating engages many senses and is a way to express when one does not have access to words. Additionally, there is a focus on the body while creating and not the narrative of the trauma story. Art making is thought to use both left and right hemispheres of the brain to process what may not be conscious material. When the pulse of the body is disrupted by a traumatic event, one approach that may help return the pulse of the body is to engage the individual in a

repeating movement or process that can unstick what has become stuck in the nervous system (Levine, 1997; Tripp, 2016). Tripp (2007) has used both tactile and auditory means to generate bilateral stimulation of the brain when the client is engaged in art making. Similar to the beat of a drum generating a repeating auditory rhythm for the individual to attune to and flow with (Kossak, 2015), the repeating sound or sensation paired with art making transforms traumatic memory and facilitates healing. The bilateral stimulation can produce a calming effect, similar to that of the heart beating or the lungs breathing.

There have been additional art therapists that have used repetitive movements for healing; including, Urhausen (2015), an art therapist that works with children who have experienced trauma. She encouraged repetitive, bilateral movements while creating, such as: children squeezing playdoh in the left hand and then the right repetitively or finger painting and moving the fingers from left to right repetitively in the paint. While engaging with the sensory is an important component of healing and/or trauma resolution, I would not necessarily lead with finger painting for a child that has experienced a trauma. I could see the direct contact with the paint as being overstimulating and would prefer to have a tool available for use, such as a paintbrush, that would create some distance between the sensory stimuli of the paint and the body. An additional art therapist who has used repetition is Tobin (2006), who wrote about using a repetitive physical image paired with bilateral stimulation to facilitate healing. He encouraged clients to dance with the image until it was transformed. Lastly, Homer (2015), used fabric collage as a neurodevelopmental approach to trauma treatment. The collaging of tactile materials in a repetitive and rhythmic fashion assisted in the remediation of trauma and stimulated the limbic system. Homer used a developmentally appropriate art making directive with adults who were working through childhood trauma. The fabrics were tactilely diverse and soothing to touch

and collage together. Homer wrote about the brain and the impact that rhythmic movement can have on the brain but did not address how rhythmic movement impacts the body. Similar to Tripp (2007), there appears to be an emphasis on how repetitive movements in art making can impact the brain and not on how these movements can impact the body. So much gets missed in the art making process when one only focuses on the brain and how the brain is impacted by the creative process of art making and there is no mention of the body. It is surprising to me that a great portion of art therapy researchers are almost hyper-focused on the brain but there is little to no mention of the body. There is a large gap in the research in regards to how the body is impacted by art making and a great need for research in this area.

The use of repetition is naturally present in the body and is used in many ways to facilitate healing through mantra repetition, accessing the felt sense, and creating artwork. It is also deeply embedded in the contemplative practices of mindfulness, mindfulness meditation, meditation, and breath. The following section will review these contemplative practices and their connections to art making and art therapy.

Contemplative Practices

The contemplative practices of mindfulness, mindfulness meditation, meditation, and breath, and their intersections with art making and art therapy, will be more fully explored below. All practices involve repetition, a slowing down and looking deeper.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is an awareness and focus, an awakening and presence, and is connected to an object in the present moment (Hanh, 2014). It is a true presence of body and mind in the moment and allows for one to be in harmony with one's surroundings (Hanh, 2015). It requires bringing undivided attention to the present moment and all that is inside and outside of self and it

fosters an awakening of self. In order for one to fully know oneself, being present with the mind and body in the present moment is essential (Levine, 2010). Mindfulness can be practiced when sitting and connecting with awareness or while doing a task or activity, such as art making.

Mindfulness and Art Making/Therapy. Hanh (1991) states that mindfulness is being alive and awake in the present moment and is of utmost importance while creating. He believes that human beings are constantly creating and that in order to encounter art, one must be present. Franklin (2017) has found artmaking to be a contemplative practice, similar to breathing. He believes it is important to listen to imagery, follow imagery, and work in collaboration with the image. It is in the present moment, paired with repetitive mindful breathing, grounding, deep and compassionate listening, and mindful observation of what is being created that one can be transformed (Hanh, 1991).

Additionally, Isis (2014) has written about mindfulness in connection to the expressive arts. She believes that all of the expressive arts are a window to the sensory experience, whether one is engaged by sight, smell, touch, taste, or hearing, when one is connected to a sensory experience, one is brought into the present moment. The expressive arts, and in this case art therapy, allow individuals to connect to the present moment through touch, smell, hearing, and sight.

The concept of mindfulness is embedded across the expressive arts and has been used in treatment for individuals affected by cancer (Luzzatto et al., 2014; Peterson, 2014), chronic pain (Fritsche, 2014), trauma (Tantia, 2014), anger (Gluck, 2014), substance dependence (Van Dort & Grocke, 2014), and mental illness (Herring, 2014). Mindfulness is also present in different forms of expressive therapy approaches, including: authentic movement (Avstreih, 2014), focusing-oriented art therapy (Rappaport, 2014), Hakomi and art therapy (Rothaus, 2014), person-centered

expressive arts therapy (Chang, 2014), and creative mindfulness which is a combination of Dialectical Behavior Therapy and expressive arts therapy (Von Daler & Schwanbeck, 2014). One of the reasons that I think mindfulness has been so embraced across the expressive therapies is because healing requires connection to the present moment. Without a connection to the present moment, healing shifts cannot occur. Additionally, art therapy, and other expressive therapies, inherently connect with movement and the sensory which bridge connection to the present moment. Without consciously trying to be present, the body brings one to the present moment through the sensory. Additionally, using art making as meditation or pairing art making with meditation, is one way to increase awareness, slow down, and connect with depth, an additional method is to practice mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that brings feelings, thoughts, and sensations into the present moment. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a specific type of mindfulness meditation that consists of a non-judgmental focus on what is happening on the inside of the body and what is happening on the outside of the body (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). MBSR consists of an intensive, eight-week program based on ancient healing practices that aim to cultivate a greater awareness of sensations, thoughts, behaviors, and feelings while fostering physical, emotional, and spiritual health. It is a practice of quieting the mind and body, being with the whole self, and repeatedly coming back to the present moment. It is not easy to practice and takes time, patience, and gentleness. It is through the repetitive daily practice and focus on the present moment that stress can be reduced and the body can return to homeostasis (Isis, 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2005). Practicing mindfulness meditation is not easy and requires patience and gentleness. It can be incredibly uncomfortable at times, the body can be screaming and the

mind can be doing somersaults but it is through the constant return to the moment and using the breath as an anchor, that slowness, depth, knowing, and healing shifts can occur.

There have been several studies conducted on the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation. For instance, Goyal et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of the existing research on mindfulness meditation and the effects on psychological stress and well-being, the analysis consisted of 18,753 citations and 47 trials (N = 3515). They found that mindfulness meditation moderately reduced anxiety after eight weeks of meditation (d = 0.38 [95% CI, 0.12-0.64]) and after three to six months of practice (d = 0.22 [95% CI, 0.02-0.43]). Practicing mindfulness meditation reduced depression, physical pain, and showed an improvement in stress levels and quality of life. The analysis showed no effect on positive mood, attention, substance use/dependence, diet, sleeping, and weight. Overall, the findings showed a reduction in psychological stress and improved quality of life (Goyal et al., 2014). Additionally, after an eight-week MBSR course, studies have shown that there is an increase of gray matter in the brain which involves an increased capacity for learning and memory, affect regulation, processing, and perspective (Hölzel et al., 2011). This is one area of research explored that did not have a gap in the literature. Mindfulness meditation has also been paired with art making to help engagement with the senses and a return to the present moment.

Mindfulness Meditation and Art Making/Therapy. Isis (2014) combined elements of Kabat-Zinn's (1990) MBSR with art therapy to provide opportunities for individuals to have an increased knowledge of self and surroundings. She would encourage the return to the present moment through the senses, repeating gestures, and focusing over and over while creating. It was in the repetition, constant return to the present moment, and deep focusing, that relief and respite surfaced (Isis, 2014). Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature in regards to art

making and/or art therapy and mindfulness meditation, it would be interesting to read empirical research that explored how creating paired with mindfulness meditation could affect healing and well-being. While mindfulness can be a component of meditation, it may also be separate. Meditation and a connection to art making and art therapy is more fully explored in the following section.

Meditation

According to Hanh (2014), *meditation* consists of two components: stopping and depth. Through the practice of meditation and focus, one can stop and look deeply at what is present, this allows for one to have an increased understanding of internal and external processes (Hanh, 2014). Meditation is a way to live deeply and to know the deepest layers of oneself (Hanh, 2015). Meditative practices require one to set an intention and to use deep focus to bring self-regulation to the body and mind (Cahn & Polich, 2006). It can be practiced in many different ways; such as, repeating a mantra (Feuerstein, 2003), viewing an image with repeating shapes and objects (Khanna, 1979), using mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Rappaport, 2014); or yoga (Feuerstein, 1998, 2001; Wallis, 2012).

Meditation is predominately mindful (as in mindfulness meditation), concentrative, or can have elements of both (Franklin, 2017). The concentrative meditation works with an intentional focus on repeating a mantra, could be through sound, movement, or image. There is a deep focus and repetition of the mantra over and over. The concentrative practice is rooted in Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Sufism (Chittick, 1989; Franklin, 2017). The practice of meditation, whether concentrative or mindful, is not easy. Those that practice meditation may have some area of discomfort that they are seeking relief/healing from or may be looking to

answer questions that have not been able to be answered by other means. It is a practice and a discipline.

Further research on the effects of meditation have shown that the medial prefrontal and cingulate cortices deactivate during meditation, and participants who were experienced in practicing meditation had a greater coupling between the posterior cingulate, dorsal anterior cingulate, and dorsolateral prefrontal cortices while meditating than not meditating (Brewer et al., 2011). Meditation has also been found to increase metabolism, slow heart rate and breathing, lower blood pressure, and change the chemistry of the brain, inducing a *relaxation response* and calming effect on the body (Benson, 1997; Cahn & Polich, 2006). The relaxation response involves a decrease in sympathetic nervous system activity and an increase in parasympathetic nervous system activity, breath slows and becomes more rhythmic, heartrate slows, and pupils constrict. This state increases connection to creativity, a quieting of the mind and body, and restores rhythm or regulation of the body (Benson, 1997). Meditation can also increase the flow response (Marr, 2001), slow aging (Luders et al., 2015), and increase happiness (Rai, 2013). There is a breadth of research on the positive effects of meditation, due to this it has been added to many hospital programs, schools, therapy practices, businesses, and other establishments, as a way for individuals to slow down and manage stress. The practice of meditation can also mirror the practice of art making, can be paired with art making, and is explored in greater detail below.

Meditation and Art Making/Therapy. Meditation and art making have several overlaps, they are both ways to travel inward, require silence, can be done alone, and involve an observing witness (Franklin, 1999). In meditation and art making there is a balancing between relaxation and being alert (Sogyal, 1993). Franklin (2017) found art making to be meditative and emphasized the importance of listening to images, creating an image or object repetitively until

the message was received, moving with imagery, and viewing artwork without judgement. He found the process of creating over and over in this way to be regulating for both body and mind and fostered connection to spirit. McNiff (1998) likened creating to meditative practices and emphasized the importance of staying with the creative process despite discomfort in order to yield assimilation and flow. There is a peace that comes from meditative art making and a deep connection to the present moment, self, and all things outside of the self. It is a transforming experience. Furthermore, meditation consists of a deep focus inward that slows the mind, it is a witnessing. Using gentleness, pauses, and a witness process, are all part of meditative art making practices and are discussed below.

Gentleness and Art Making/Therapy. Soft hands have a place in creative expression. Richards (1989) believed that a critical element of *centering* was compassion and emphasized the importance of viewing with clear eyes and compassion for the image. The image reveals intimate layers of an individual and requires a softness or gentleness in creating and viewing. A softness allows for one to see with the heart and the great depth of the heart center (Richards, 1989). Rogers (1993) also believed that creating with a gentleness generated from love and hope can lead to an opening for healing. Engaging with the art media and image with gentleness can create heartfelt imagery, images that are deeply felt and sincere. Hillman (1992) has written about the heart being the home of imagination or creativity. It is the heart that reveals images, it is a thinking and feeling organ. One philosophy of the heart is that it is courage, strength and passion and can hold love, feelings, the soul and sense of self but also sin and desire (Hillman, 1992). The gentleness or softness that comes with art making also requires a pause at times to allow space for assimilation.

***Pause and Art Making/Therapy*.** Taking a moment to stop creating and pause, allows for stillness, depth, connection, and assimilation. The pause is an "opportunity to integrate" (P. Allen, personal communication, March 26, 2020). McNiff (2015) encouraged clients and students to pause while creating to deepen the work and asserted that it often is the most significant aspect of the creative experience. Hanh (2014) believed the pause allowed for one to re-center and gave time for one to breathe. The pause brought attention to the content, allowed for one to absorb what has happened, and assimilate what has happened. For a society that values constantly moving, achieving, and doing more and more, individuals need to pause and take time to rest. There is respite, re-centering, and joy in the pause. So much happens in the pause, including healing and a restoration of energy (Hanh, 2015). It is in the stopping and looking, there is a witnessing of the creation that has been birthed.

***Witnessing and Art Making/Therapy*.** When one slows and stops, one can see. Allen (2005) noted that witnessing requires stillness, or a pause, and a deep listening. It includes an awareness of breath and the body in the present moment and a return from the creative process. She emphasized the importance of witnessing the image and each other in the present moment with compassion, non-judgement, and soft and clear eyes to fully hear what is being communicated (Allen, 1995a). As part of witnessing the image, Allen (2005) encouraged writing in connection to the image, creating a dialogue that can capture the deepest truth the image is holding. She emphasized the importance of trusting the process and of the creative processes ability to connect or reconnect with one's soul (Allen, 1995a).

Allen, Block, and Gadiel, took the notion of the witness, paired with attention, and intention, and developed the Open Studio Project in Evanston, Illinois (Allen, 1995b; Block et al., 2005). The Open Studio Project is an art studio that uses the *open studio process* to facilitate

healing, connection, and transformation. The open studio process consists of setting a written intention for creating, art making, *witness writing*, and sharing. The process is a way to connect with the creative source and to express messages from the source to help ourselves and others (Allen, 2001). Witness writing is writing following artmaking that is in connection to the image and/or process, it is a free-flow writing that does not judge or critique but expands the creation through writing. It allows for the creator to develop a deeper connection to the image and the process. When an individual shares their writing, the remainder of the group holds the space and does not comment. This process allows for the creator and the creation to be witnessed and held. Block et al. (2005) used the open studio process with at-risk youth as a means of social action. The open studio process helped youth to express themselves, problem solve, be seen and heard, and release and ground.

Franklin (1999) found witnessing to be the observation of the rise and fall of internal processes and the rise and fall of what is happening externally. He writes of a witness awareness and a witness consciousness that fosters a non-duality and connection amongst all things. Witnessing is something that is happening constantly as one is creating and is an important component of connecting with the creative source. Gentleness paired with a non-judgmental holding of the creation as it emerges helps to ensure the truest of creations is emerging when it is needed by the creator.

In the case of art therapy, the art therapist becomes a mirror and a witness for the client and the creation becomes a holder or container and a witness (Allen, 1995a, 2005; Franklin, 1999). The art therapist can also create *response artwork* in response to the client and/or artwork that has been created by the client (Jones, 1983; Fish, 2012; Moon, 1999) as a way of deepening the witnessing experience. The art therapist can create artwork alongside the client to build

relationship, visual communication, containment, and empathy in session (Fish, 2006, 2012, 2017; Franklin, 1990, 1999, 2010a, 2010b; Moon, 1999; Rubin, 2001) or after the session, to increase understanding and empathy towards the client (Wadeson, 2003; Fish, 2012). When the art therapist is open, connected to others, and the creative source, artwork created by the art therapist can hold what is present in the session or group. Creating response artwork is a witnessing process that can help deepen meaning for the client(s) in connection to the image but also deepen meaning for the art therapist. It is a powerful way of knowing and reflecting. An additional type of witnessing is used in authentic movement, which is more fully explored below.

Authentic Movement. Informed by Jungian psychology and dance/movement therapy, *authentic movement* is a type of movement used to release unconscious material from the body in the presence of a compassionate witness (Whitehouse, 1979). The individual moving brings attention to their inner experience, noticing sensation, images, and feelings as they come to awareness, and is open to the stream of movement- subtle, gestural, or full body- as movement arises. The individual then makes movements or gestures that are rooted in the body. The witness gently holds the space and is present with the movements while the mover is moving. As the movements come to an end, the mover will share about the experience and the witness will share what was seen and felt. The mover may also make art after moving to record and more fully understand the experience. Authentic movement yields an increase in awareness to what one is experiencing in the present moment and gives access to bodily experiences, one's inner life, and the felt sense (Dosamantes-Alperson, 1974; Gendlin, 1981b). It also helps you to learn to trust another, to gently and safely be in the body, and increases access to healing.

Stromsted (2009) believed that authentic movement was a way to connect with the celestial, the unconscious, and increased embodied presence. Taylor (2007) also found that

authentic movement allowed for her to connect with her unconscious and a specific spiritual presence that was a bridge and connector between her physical self and spiritual self. Taylor (2007) used a series of bilateral movements to connect with both her physical and spiritual selves while engaged with authentic movement.

***Authentic Movement and Art Making/Therapy*.** Pesonen (2008) experimented with authentic movement paired with *automatic drawing*. Automatic drawing was developed by the surrealist artists as a means of letting go of control and tapping into the subconscious. In automatic drawing, using an art tool, one moves the hand over a surface (for example: canvas or drawing paper) and makes a series of lines and marks without conscious control. The image is thought to be created by a spirit and not necessarily the creator. Creating involves movements that can move from left to right, right to left, up and down, down and up, and can be repetitive in nature. Pairing both authentic movement with automatic drawing can allow for one to connect with the unconscious and release fears, desires, and/or repressed instincts. Both processes connect with the unconscious, active imagination, and improvisation (Pesonen, 2008). Using authentic movement paired with automatic drawing is similar to that of bilateral movements used in art therapy (Tobin, 2006; Tripp, 2007, 2016; Urhausen, 2015). It would be interesting to have research conducted that paired authentic movement with art therapy, having both a dance/movement therapist and an art therapist conducting the inquiry together. This would help to address the gap in the literature when it comes to the body and art making.

The witnessing of self, others, and/or creation, pausing, and engaging with gentleness, are strong components of contemplative practices, such as: meditation, but perhaps at the core of contemplative practice is breath.

Breath

Breath is a way to be with the present moment and a way to return to the present moment. We tend to be scattered and can have our attention on many different things at one time, this pulls us away from ourselves and the present moment. As one focuses on conscious breath, body and mind come together, and one is present (Hanh, 2014). Our breath is a bridge to connect body and mind with the present moment which holds all of life. Sitting and breathing can bring many gifts, including: calmness, clarity, kindness, courage, and a release of tension (Hanh, 2014). Breath is also a way to slow the body down and come back to the moment. Being mindful of our breathing, observing and never forcing, can calm the body and mind (Hanh, 2015). When one is fully engaged and aware of breath, one can move into practicing the *four establishments of mindfulness,* which is a mindful observation of the body, affect, mind, and thought processes (Hanh, 2008). When one practices the four establishments of mindfulness over and over and sinks into the process of mindfully observing the body, affect, mind, and thought processes, one can then connect with the *seven factors of awakening*: mindfulness, exploration of truth, energy, happiness, ease, focus, and release (Hanh, 2008).

Breath and Art Making/Therapy. There is a constant repetition to breath, it is the key to life, and it is grounded and authoritative. Using mindful breathing practices, where one is aware and focused on breath, allow for the body and mind to settle and calm. Breath is generated by the lungs and reaches across all cells of the body, it can generate and manipulate movements, and is the ground for communication (Levine, 2010). Franklin (2017) believes that breath is a contemplative practice and can be an anchor while creating. Gently returning to the breath over and over while creating or feeling intense emotion can help root and ground the creator in the

present moment. More studies are warranted on the practice of breath and breath paired with art making to more fully understand its importance in connection to the creative process.

Summary

While the body of literature in connection to this research is vast, additional research is warranted to better understand how the body is impacted by art making. It was surprising there was little to no research that addressed the body in relation to art making. The art therapy research that does exist that touches on the body has a greater emphasis on how the brain is impacted by artmaking. The body is such a large component of artmaking and the healing process, it is essential that there is research to more fully address the body's role in the creative process and in healing. There was also little research that involved using a specific movement sequence in art making, the movement sequences touched on in the existing literature mostly spoke to bilateral movements and there was no research that explored slow, gentle, and repetitive movements in art making. The following research addresses this specific gap in the research and explores slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements and the effects on the creator.

CHAPTER 3

Method

Art-based research was used to explore slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements. Both the methods and the refinement of methods will be addressed in this chapter.

Research Questions

The study explored the following research questions:

- What are the effects on the participant of slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements with acrylic paints on canvas?
- What are the effects on the participant of the pauses used in the slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements with acrylic paints on canvas?

Participants

The participants in this study were co-researchers helping to explore the inquiry. All completed a written, informed consent to participate in the study and were provided a copy of the signed consent form. They all indicated on the informed consent form that they would like to be named in the study and did not want to remain anonymous. The study included five participants and myself. All were art therapists, had some level of skill and knowledge of acrylic painting and had experiences in self-exploration and being able to be in the present moment. It was desirable that participants had this knowledge and experience in order to expedite the flow of the research process, decrease the possibility of attrition, understand the implications of the research questions, and reflect upon the experimental activities. Participants were invited to participate based on the above criteria and were selected from a pool of art therapists that are my colleagues. The focus of this research was on art therapists engaging with slow, gentle, and repetitive

painting movements, in order to further understand the impact of these movements in relation to their work with others.

Materials

Art

Artwork was created while sitting at a table or standing at an easel and consisted of the following art materials: white canvases ranging in size from 16” x 20”- 18” x 24”, 30” x 40” white Bristol board, acrylic paints, palettes, and paint brushes.

Video/Photography

A GoPro camera was used to record close-ups of the art making; it was worn on the head or mounted to the table. An additional camera captured full body expressions and movements that took place during the sessions and was placed on a tripod at a distance from the participant. Lastly, a phone camera was used to document and capture stills of additional footage angles and close-ups of the art making process.

Definitions

For the purposes of this research, the following brief working definitions have been developed. They are intended as flexible guides to action:

- *Movement* is the basis of expression.
- *Pause* is a stopping of movements associated with painting.
- *Repetitive* is a repeating gesture or movement of the body.
- *Slow* is an intentional and relaxed pace.
- *Gentle* is calm and soft.

Process of Experimentation

Overview

The complete sequence of experimentation was first conducted with one participant, which is detailed below, to learn of concerns that needed to be addressed in order to more deeply explore the inquiry prior to including the additional participants. Following the completion with one participant and making adjustments and changes, a second participant engaged with the inquiry and additional changes were made, and then the remaining third, fourth, and fifth participants separately engaged with the inquiry. The methods were refined formatively as the research progressed to best address the research questions. Changes to the design were decided upon after viewing, reviewing, and editing the video footage of the most poignant clips, sharing the video with my advisor, and consulting with my advisor.

Four, 90-minute, research sessions were completed over a two-month period. The first three sessions included painting and reflective writing and the fourth and final session included a review and summary of the previous sessions which involved reflection on the paintings and viewing a three-minute edited video of the first three sessions. All sessions were video-recorded. The first three sessions included a GoPro camera that was worn on the head or mounted to the table, to capture up close imagery. A camera was used, on a tripod, to capture movements and painting from a distance. A phone camera was used to capture stills of the creating process. The fourth session included a camera recording from a tripod and the phone camera. The cameras focused on the artwork being created and the hands and arms creating the artwork.

Preparation

Prior to the beginning of each session, the space was prepared for creating. Art supplies were lined up on the table, an easel was set in the room, lighting was adjusted, and cameras prepared for recording footage.

Movements

Slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements were used to create the artwork. Movements were made with varying speeds, distances, and involved different parts of the body, like the hands holding the paintbrush and extending over the canvas and reaching with the arms and shoulders. The legs were also used to move the body and position the body at different sections of the canvas. Painting took place in seated and standing positions to see if there were any differences between these positions. The movements were guided by physical and bodily sensations and the artistic media. Although the focus was on slow, gentle, and repetitive movements, the participant had the freedom to include other movements that organically emerged while painting. Each of the painting sessions began with a silent, one minute, pause and ended with a silent, one minute, pause. Additional pauses occurred throughout the sessions as needed.

Structure of Painting Sessions One to Three

The painting sessions were structured as follows:

- Greeted the participant, oriented to space and process, and stated the research questions (approximately five minutes).
- Prepared cameras to record, attached GoPro to head or table (approximately five minutes).

- Preliminary written statement by participant indicating current state (approximately five minutes).
- Painting using slow, gentle, and repetitive movements. I observed and witnessed painting (approximately 45 minutes).
- Reflective writing in connection to current state and the painting process by the participant (approximately 5 minutes).
- Verbal reflections and processing between participant and myself (approximately 20 minutes).
- Saying good-bye (approximately five minutes).

Inquiry Exploration

The research questions were used to guide the creation of the paintings and the written and verbal reflections. Following the three painting sessions, the inquiry was further explored by doing the following:

- I created a brief response image and written response.
- Following the participant painting session, while alone, I then reviewed the video footage, paintings, and writings for each session and created an embodied response painting using acrylic paints and paint brushes on 16" x 20" white canvas. The response paintings involved mirroring the participants' movements, using the same brushes and colors, and creating similar lines and brushstrokes, in order to have a deeper understanding of what it was like for each to engage with the inquiry. While creating the embodied response painting, I paused every 5-10 minutes and viewed footage of the participant's painting session, on my computer, to hone in on mirroring specific movements. I also re-read some of the notes I took on the painting session and deeply

looked at the participant paintings during this pause before returning to painting. The focus was on the participant and their experiences of these movements as guided by the research question. These responses were recorded using a GoPro camera, a camera recording from a distance, and a phone camera.

- A written response was then completed for each response painting session, noting key features or patterns that were emerging.
- I then created an edited video of the three experimental sessions, approximately three minutes in length, highlighting the most poignant moments of the participant engaging with slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements. The edited video was created solely using footage specific to the individual and presented my observations of significant moments and processes. This edited video was reviewed in a fourth and final summary session.
- The participant also created a final response image using acrylic paints on canvas and did reflective writing at the fourth and final session.

Structure of Fourth Painting Session

The final session was structured as follows:

- Greeted and oriented to space (approximately five minutes).
- Viewed edited video summarizing three previous art making sessions (approximately five minutes).
- Comments about video (approximately 15 minutes).
- Viewed paintings and response paintings (15 minutes).
- Painting and written reflection in connection to the painting sessions by participant (approximately 25 minutes).

- Verbal reflection and processing (approximately 20 minutes).
- Saying good-bye and thanking participant (approximately five minutes).

A final edited video was created, approximately ten minutes in length, documenting the comprehensive findings for all five participants and a final written response. The video recording was used to document the art making as it emerged, collecting the evidence of the inquiry.

Filming and Reflective Research Process

The process of filming, viewing the footage, reflecting on the footage, and creating an edited video, all allowed me to go deeper into the inquiry and explored the essence of what emerged. Capturing the paintings on video as they were created was essential to understanding and reflect on this research process. The participant paintings were all recorded on video, as were my response paintings. Viewing the footage and reflecting on the footage, allowed me to see the outcomes that were emerging from this study. In reviewing the video collected for each participant, I was able to identify the most poignant painting moments and included these moments in a three minutes long edited video for each participant.

While I watched the painting live, I also watched the paintings through the GoPro camera app on my phone, which showed the video that was being captured live. There was a richness present in the live version that was not captured on video but the footage had a deep focus on the paint being applied to the canvas. Viewing the brush applying paint through the camera lens on the GoPro app, allowed for me to clearly see the most poignant painting moments without any other distractions. I found myself watching more of what was happening through the camera lens and could pinpoint which brushstrokes I would be adding to the edited video as they were being created. Viewing the footage being recorded live increased my perceptual awareness and increased my ability to focus on the painting movements. There was a framing of the painting

movements with a close-up perspective, much like a microscope, and an elimination of all surrounding visual stimuli.

After recording the paintings being created on film, I then created the edited video for each participant. I sat with the footage and watched it again, editing and creating shorter clips to then include in the edited video for each participant. The editing of the footage allowed for me to dive into the evidence and pull out the most significant brushstrokes that clearly showed slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements. I was able to view each painting movement as a complete entity, with an increased focus and study of the respective characteristics for each movement. It was also a very calming experience to view the footage and explore the painting movements in this way.

Viewing the Edited Video, Paintings, and Embodied Response Paintings. At the fourth session, each participant's edited video was viewed individually with time to process and reflect. Prior to the participant arriving to the space for the fourth session, I arranged both their paintings and my response paintings for viewing. I placed the participant paintings against the wall with my response paintings adjacent to each of their respective paintings in chronological order by session number. The participant could then see all of the paintings and corresponding response paintings upon entry to the room. It was a very intimate experience to create the edited video, response paintings, and then to view the paintings, response paintings, and edited video. To capture someone else's brushstrokes on video and then to edit that footage required great respect for the painting process and needed to be held with care. The paintings were extensions of the participant and to have permission to witness the paintings come to life and then to edit the footage of their creations and create a response painting was an amazing process. Even though the participants were asked to paint using specific painting movements of slow, gentle, and

repetitive, this process was still very personal and each painting was unique. Additionally, the process of painting is inherently personal because the individual is expressing through visual and sensory form. To be witness to this personal process of expression was indeed intimate. It is for all of these reasons that the paintings, the process, and the participants were treated with the utmost respect and care.

When I shared the edited video with each participant, I sat next to them as they viewed the video, held the space with my presence, and welcomed thoughts and feelings about the footage. I asked questions in connection to the research questions and held a gentle curiosity to their experience of using slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements. The participants then commented on their respective video, paintings, and response paintings. They shared that they enjoyed viewing the video and the paintings; many were surprised by the brushstrokes that they had used and reported it was calming to view the video and the paintings. Additionally, they reported that painting in this way fostered an atmosphere of non-judgement when viewing their paintings and the response paintings. They were all open and grateful for this process, reporting that in seeing the edited video and the response pieces that they "felt seen" and "held." After the fourth session for each participant, I then sent the edited video to my advisor for his review and feedback. The footage, in addition to the paintings, was the evidence that was studied for this inquiry, it was my microscope to fully understand slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements.

Summary of Reflective Research Process. The video paired with witnessing the paintings come to life, being with the paintings, creating response paintings and written reflections, all helped with the depth of the inquiry. The process of creating, reflection,

documentation, and examination played a fundamental role in the materialization of outcomes. The reflective research process was necessary in order to fully understand the outcomes.

Refinement of Methods

After completing the sequence of experimentation with the first participant, changes were made to the methods to more deeply explore the inquiry with the second participant. Changes to the design were decided upon after viewing, reviewing, and editing the video footage of the most poignant clips of the first participant, sharing the video with my advisor, and consulting with my advisor.

The changes and rationale for the changes are listed below:

- The number of painting sessions was extended from four to six sessions to see if additional sessions warranted a deeper engagement with the slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements. It was challenging for the first participant to use these movements and I was curious to see if additional sessions would help with the engagement of using these types of movements.
- The canvas size was increased from 16” x 20” to 18” x 24” for both the participant paintings and my response paintings. The smaller canvas size limited the amount of space the first participant had to paint on and shifted her to move away from present moment painting. She was more focused on a final product and filling up the space then engaging in moment to moment use of slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements.
- The first participant had the option to paint while seated or standing and chose to remain seated for many painting sessions. With the seated position, she had limited motility of the hands, arms, and body, and extension of the wrist. For the following participants, I asked that they stand at an easel while engaging with the inquiry.

- I began gently reminding all to use the slow, gentle, and repetitive movements when they began painting with fast or pressured strokes. The first participant was naturally a fast painter and I did not want to limit the types of movements she was using to paint with but as a result of not gently coaching her, there were limited slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements.
- The final change that was made after the first participant engaged with the inquiry, involved the way that the paintings and experimentation sequence was processed and reflected upon at the final session. The first participant created a response painting at her final session and we did not have a great deal of time to sit with her paintings and the response paintings. The final response painting did not feel necessary, it felt more important to use the time and space to sit in quiet observation, witness, and reflection of her paintings and my response paintings, to view the edited video of the three painting sessions and reflect, and to have additional time for verbal processing of the paintings and our time together.

The above changes were implemented for the second participant's engagement with the inquiry. Following the completion of the sequence of experimentation with her, additional changes were made to the methods to more deeply explore the inquiry with the remaining participants. Changes to the design were decided upon after viewing, reviewing, and editing the video footage of the most poignant clips, sharing the video with my advisor, and consulting with my advisor. The changes and rationale for the changes following the second complete sequence of experimentation are listed below:

- After using six sessions with the second participant, it became apparent that four sessions were enough to explore the inquiry. Adding additional sessions did not alter whether or

not the inquiry was more deeply explored, it was in the changing of the methods that warranted a deeper exploration of the inquiry. The remaining participants each completed four sessions while engaging with the inquiry.

- The painting surface was increased from the 18" x 24" white canvases to 30" x 40" white Bristol board for both the participant paintings and for my response paintings. This change was made because the canvases were not large enough to explore the inquiry. The second participant needed more space to explore the inquiry and move her body. The larger surface encouraged a slowing down and allowed for an increased awareness of the movements being used to create the brushstrokes. It also encouraged a moment to moment engagement with slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements.
- I began using a brief movement warmup with the remaining participants prior to painting. Many were intimidated by the size of the painting surface and appreciated a gentle warmup. They held a paint-less paintbrush over the Bristol board and reached and extended repetitively over the surface, practicing slow, gentle, and repetitive movements. The gentle warmup relaxed all and prepared them to paint in this way.
- The last change that I made was to ask all to paint in silence. I found that any verbal exchange while creating with the first and second participants pulled away from engaging with slow, gentle, and repetitive movements. It became a distraction and limited our ability to hear the paint being applied to the canvas. It was necessary to have a quiet painting space void of noise during the painting sessions and during the response painting times.

The above changes were implemented for the remaining participants' engagement with the inquiry. It was in the refinement and evolution of the art-based research methods above that

slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements were able to be explored more deeply. The methods would not have explored this inquiry as accurately or as in depth without the gentle evolution and changes that were made over time as the participants engaged with the inquiry. The refinement of the methods has become a core outcome of this research.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Research Questions

The study explored the following research questions:

- What are the effects on the participant of slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements with acrylic paints on canvas?
- What are the effects on the participant of the pauses used in the slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements with acrylic paints on canvas?

Note that there are images embedded throughout the results chapter to more fully illustrate the outcomes of the study. All paintings and response paintings can be viewed in Appendix D. Links to the edited videos for each participant and the link to the final culminating video can be found in Appendix C.

Summary of Outcomes

The effects on the participants of using slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements, paired with pauses during this process, yielded the following outcomes: it was challenging to paint slowly, there was an increase in connection to present moment awareness and immersion, a meditative painting state was induced, there was an increased connection to self and embodiment, the role of the witness and being witnessed was significant, and the refinement of methods allowed for an accurate exploration of the art-based inquiry.

Outcome One: Challenging to Paint Slowly

At first, it was overwhelming and challenging for the participants to use slow painting movements. They expressed being socialized to go fast and to complete things that they started. A going slow intentionally and not necessarily finishing a painting, was a very different process

and felt foreign. Painting slowly, intentionally, went against natural painting movements for many. It was a slowing down and an exaggeration of the slow, which was not always the rhythm that the body or the brush wanted to follow.

One participant asked, “Well, why not go slow? We are always trying to find ways to make things faster, why can’t we find ways to make things slower?” There was also a tension between wanting to be done or finished and going slow. For instance, Liz, was painting on 16” x 20” white canvas and desired to complete the entire canvas during the painting sessions. She shared that it felt uncomfortable to not complete the canvases, this caused her to use faster painting strokes to make sure the piece was completed in the time allotted, see below image.

Figure 1. Liz painting entire canvas

Participants also reported that it was challenging to go slow, “like a work-out,” and hard to hold the hand and arm up for extended periods of time. The below image shows Sarah holding her dominant arm up with her non-dominant hand due to her dominant arm and shoulder getting fatigued while painting slowly.

Figure 2. Sarah holding arm up to paint slowly

Additionally, some would organically turn the canvas or reposition the body to help with slowing down. For example, Liz would turn the canvas to help herself slow down and it also slowed down the strokes of the brush:

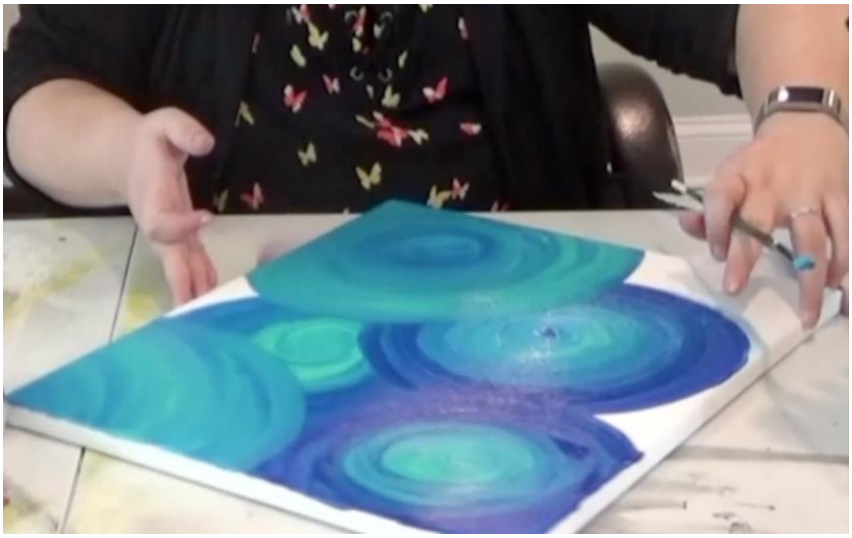

Figure 3. Liz turning canvas

The participants expressed that although it was challenging to go slow, the small movements felt big and they could feel that going slow also slowed them down. They expressed being able to see more when going slowly, for instance: seeing the paint hug the paper or canvas and noticing the

tiny movements present even when no perceived movement was happening during the pause. They shared that there was also a great deal of movement in the slow brushstrokes. It was as if the slowing and stillness warranted an increase in movement.

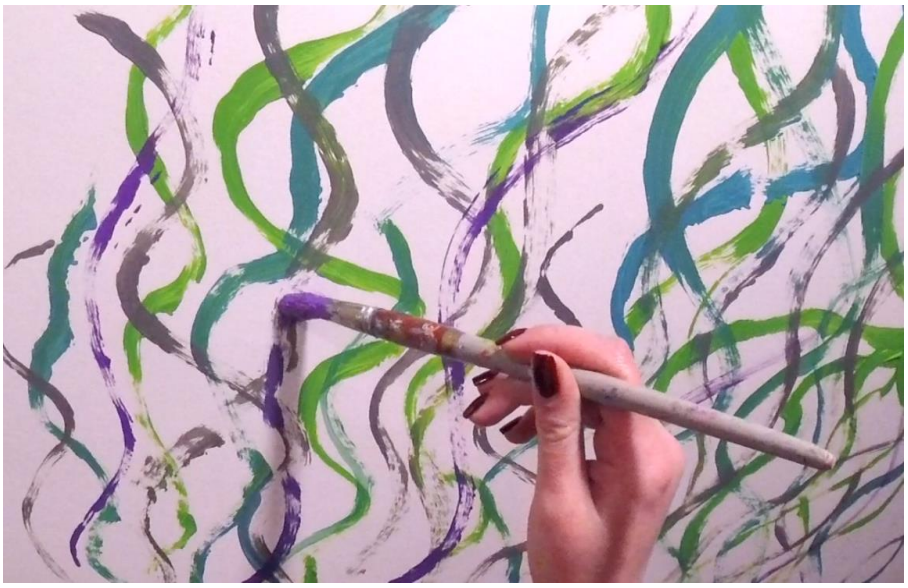

Figure 4. Brushstroke movements

One participant shared:

> Just because it is hard to go slow, does not mean that we do not need to go slow. I can feel it is helping somehow, it is slowing me down and that feels good.

Although challenging, participants did not share frustration over focusing on the painting movements and reported that it was a different way to paint. For instance, “It was uncomfortable and yet somehow needed, just a different way to paint.” Overall, painting slowly was challenging and the reported consensus was that it was needed. It also allowed for additional outcomes to materialize, such as: increased present moment awareness and immersion, an increased connection to embodiment and induced a meditative state.

Outcome Two: Increased Present Moment Awareness and Immersion

Creating in this way was very much a moment to moment process and increased present moment awareness and immersion. In order to paint with slow, gentle and repetitive brushstrokes, a focusing was warranted in the moment that greatly increased present moment awareness and immersion. Participants reported that to go slow, there needed to be an increased focus on the paint being applied and the movements being used in the moment. Carla shared, "You have to focus more to go slower and when you do that you are more present in the moment." There was also a deep focusing on the parts of the painting being created in the moment and not the entire composition from moment to moment. Due to this, some of the paintings were completed in sections with a focus on one part of the painting at a time. For instance, Carla completed the below painting with a focus on one section of the painting a time:

Figure 5. Carla focusing on a section of the painting

Participants also reported creating a series of little paintings within a larger painting. For instance, Jacquie reported, "I didn't see the whole painting, I really focused on part painting- the little paintings within the painting." Many did not see the whole painting while creating but instead focused on painting one section at a time.

Sarah reported:

> I was more focused on watching little parts of the larger painting. I was focused on every little section in the moment as the paint was being applied.

Figure 6. Jacquie focusing on paint applied in sections

In addition to focusing and painting slowly, the pauses that happened organically during the process and at the beginning and end of each session fostered an increase in present moment awareness and immersion. Liz shared, “I can see more details in my paintings when I pause.” Jacquie shared, “The pause was a time for noticing.”

Furthermore, those that painted on the 30” x 40” Bristol board reported there was no pressure to complete the paintings which helped them to stay in the moment, they focused on the painting process in the moment and not the aesthetics of the final piece. This focusing increased connection to self, mind and body, and the moment, it also relieved overwhelm and conscious thoughts were quieted. Liz shared, “I focused on movements and not thoughts. I didn’t have to decide what I was going to paint next and let the brush decide.” Sarah also shared, “I could focus on what the paint was doing on the paper, rather than thinking about other stuff.” At times, the

mind would wonder while painting and it was the slowness, repetition, and focusing, that would bring the mind and body back to the moment. One participant reported, “We need these types of movements to slow ourselves down to truly see what is important, feel what is important, and be present in our everyday lives.” It was through using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, that present moment awareness and immersion was increased. This increase in connection to the present moment was connected to outcome three, inducing a meditative painting state.

Outcome Three: Induced a Meditative Painting State

The rhythm of the slow, gentle and repetitive painting brushstrokes, the deep focusing, and the quiet space helped to induce a meditative state. Participants reported that painting in this way was a spiritual and calming experience. There was a peace and calming following creation, they reported feeling lighter, at ease, relaxed, and centered. Katelyn reported, “I focused on the rhythm of the brushstrokes from beginning to end and my sense of time was distorted, it felt meditative.”

Figure 7. Katelyn using repetitive brushstrokes

Sarah shared:

> I feel like I had time to zone out and not think, time went by fast, and I was in the flow experience. My mind and body are calmer now.

It was the intentional use of the brushstrokes repeating the same slow and gentle movements over and over and the deep focusing on the color, strokes, and paint being applied, that the sense of time was greatly altered. It was as if the brushstrokes, with every stroke, slowly and repetitively removed the stress of the day, the stress that was in the body and mind, and allowed for the participants to simply be present with their eyes open and their bodies fully engaged in the painting process. It was a mesmerizing process, there was almost no choice but to focus and slow down. The paint was so engaging as it hugged the canvas or the board; the colors and richness of the movements as they connected with the surface left us with nowhere else to look but where the paint was being applied to the surface. Using painting movements in this way, the movements became a mantra to slow down with gentleness, focus, and induced the meditative state. The strokes held both the body and mind with gentleness and allowed for the time to pass swiftly and stress to be released from the body. The movement mantra of slow, gentle, and repetitive, allowed for a deepening into the process and the moment. Jacquie shared:

> I now feel relaxed and feel that my spirituality was definitely a part of the painting, this process is reminiscent of *tai chi*. I had a really relaxing time, in my own mind, in my own space…even though you were there.

Figure 8. Jacquie painting using movements similar to *tai chi*

In addition to inducing a meditative state, the painting process yielded outcome four: an increased connection to self and embodiment.

Outcome Four: Increased Connection to Self and Embodiment

Painting in this way, participants reported an increase in connection to self and embodiment. They could feel their physical bodies more and were more connected to their emotional state in the moment. Furthermore, the whole body painted, not just the hand or the arm, but the entire body painted. The slower the movements, the more embodied and present one became. The slower the body moved, the more they could feel their bodies and their muscles. For example, Sarah shared, “I could feel my body more- it felt heavy and my arm felt heavy.” Additionally, as the movements slowed, there was an increase in sensory stimulation and connection to the body. Liz shared, “The more my senses are engaged, the slower my body moves.” It was in the slowing down that they could see more and feel more. Using paint was a sensory stimulating and containing way to exaggerate the slowing down and increase the sensory experience and connection to self. Had paint not been used and movements been used alone, there would not

have been the depth of sensory stimulation. There was also a reporting that painting in this way was like a dance of movements similar to *tai chi*. The visual, tactile, olfactory, and auditory senses were all stimulated during this process.

Visual Stimulation

Participants watched each bristle of the brush apply paint to the painting surface and the colors of the paint being applied, this helped with slowing down and embodiment. They also intensely watched the colors of the paints and the blending of the paints, focusing more on the brushstrokes then shapes or content of what was being created.

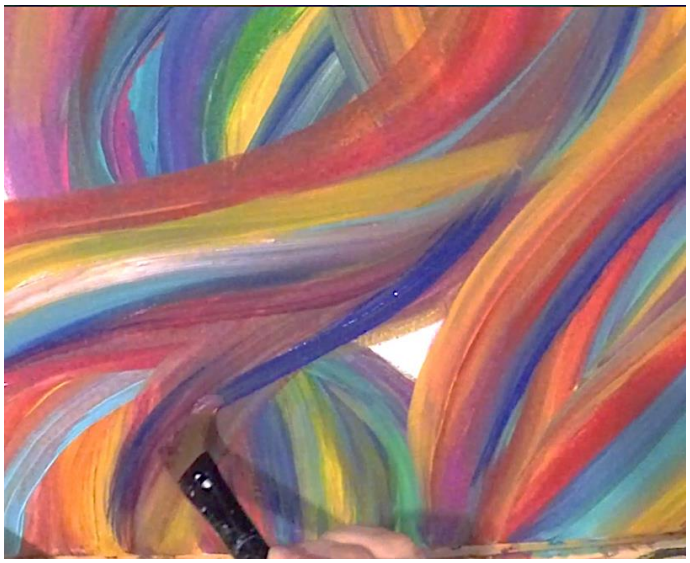

Figure 9. Paint colors stimulating vision

Tactile Stimulation

The participants could feel the brush, the paper/canvas, and the paints. Some would touch each brush with their fingers and brush the bristles across their face before deciding which brush they would like to use for painting. Liz shared, “The softer the bristles, the better.” They also touched the paint before deciding which paints they would like to use for painting and some touched the paint while painting.

Figure 10. Liz touching canvas with painted hand

The thicker the paints, the slower the movements of the brush, and the more paint that was applied to the board/canvas.

Figure 11. Thick paint on brush and Bristol board

Olfactory Stimulation

The participants could smell the paints and the painting surface, both the Bristol board and the canvas had a scent. The paints smelled earthy and as they were brushed onto the canvas, became more fragrant. It was a subtle, comforting smell of fresh paint. The Bristol board and

canvas had a slightly sour smell that was also comforting and familiar. They reported that the scent of the paints and painting surface helped increased connection to the body and allowed the body to settle even more. As they breathed in the smells, I could physically see their bodies settle and shoulders lower. This was an intimate painting process that warranted a closeness to the canvas which increased connection to the smells of the paints and painting surface.

Auditory Stimulation

The participants could also hear the paints as they were applied to the board/canvas. As the bristles of the brush connected with the painting surface, there was a report of hearing the scratching of the bristles on the painting surface or the whisking smoothness of the paint being applied. This process needed silence, any exterior sounds pulled away from the delicate sounds of the paints being applied, which in return pulled away from connection to the moment and self.

Physical Bracing and Release

In addition to sensory stimulation fostering an increase to self and embodiment, there was a reporting of a softening or release of physical pains after painting with slow, gentle and repetitive movements. Through self-report and what I noticed, it was discovered that participants were bracing their bodies as they began to paint at the beginning of the painting sessions. Although uncomfortable, the bracing increased connection to self. This was a new way to paint for all and they reported finding themselves bracing to ensure they were “doing it right” as one shared. This bracing also caused some to hold their breath and to tremble but as they continued with the brushstrokes, the movements softened the bracing, calmed the body and breath returned. It was in this transition, from bracing to flowing with the paint, that there was a release of tension. After the release happened, the body then moved with the brushstrokes. The painting process softened the tension of the holding and encouraged the release. They could feel a release

from their bodies after painting and physical pains were softened or removed. Jacquie shared, “Every time that I painted, I came in with a sore shoulder and was able to relax and release tension.” Sarah shared after finishing a painting session, “I feel lighter and at ease.”

Pauses Used in Painting Process

In addition to the release fostering an increase in connection to self, the pauses taken throughout the process helped with an assimilation and settling of the body and mind. The deeper into the process, the more the body and the mind settled. There was an explosiveness at times during the painting process, sitting with the painting following the explosiveness fostered an assimilation and a grounding or settling of the body and thus an increase in connection to self and embodiment.

Overall, this painting process fostered an increase in connection to self and embodiment through the specific painting movements used, engagement with sensory stimulation, the bracing and release of the body, and the pauses used throughout the painting process. The increase in connection to self and embodiment is closely connected to the first three outcomes: challenging to go slow, increased present moment awareness and immersion, and induced a meditative painting state. As the first four outcomes of this art-based inquiry materialized, I realized the presence and importance of the following, fifth outcome, that of being witnessed and witnessing.

Outcome Five: Being Witnessed and Witnessing

Being witnessed and witnessing were core components of this research and were always present during the painting sessions. As part of being witnessed, participants reported an increase in confidence and self-satisfaction, an enjoyment of the process, and feeling seen. As the witness, I felt a level of attunement to each participant while they were painting and created an embodied response painting following each painting session as a way to deepen the witnessing experience

and the depth of outcomes. I paused every 5-10 minutes while creating the response painting and viewed footage of the participant's painting session, on my computer, to hone in on mirroring specific movements. I also re-read some of the notes I took on the painting session and deeply looked at the participant paintings during this pause before returning to painting. The focus was on the participant and their experiences of these movements as guided by the research question. The process of being witnessed and witnessing are very different experiences, both will be explained below in the context of this research.

Being Witnessed

While the participants engaged with the inquiry and painted, I non-judgmentally observed and witnessed the process unfold and the cameras also observed and witnessed the process unfold in the moment. In being witnessed, there was a report of feeling seen, that the essential qualities of participant paintings were captured in the response paintings, and they expressed gratitude for this process. Additionally, there was a report of increased confidence and self-satisfaction and an enjoyment of the process.

Confidence/Self-Satisfaction. Participants reported that they felt confident and satisfied with the paintings they created and did not judge or critique their creations. They reported the process was validating and was a time for noticing, allowing for one to be more capable than what they may have initially believed. It was a "self-esteem booster," encouraged patience, reflection, and was a different way of seeing. They also reported the process warranted a gentleness with themselves. Sarah reported, "I am content and feel confident. I am happy with the outcome." Jacquie shared, "I didn't like my painting at first but it grew on me and I love how organic it is. I feel more excited about it now and seeing all of the paintings together." There was not a focus on content or the final product but a focus on the moment to moment movements and

the pauses used throughout the painting process. It was this shift that helped participants take a nonjudgmental stance towards their paintings. Additionally, painting in this way was new for all and they were unsure of themselves and their creations in the beginning. This process helped to show them that they could master a process that felt foreign or unnatural and thus allowed for them to feel confident about their creations and about themselves.

Enjoyment of the Process. Participants reported that they enjoyed seeing all of their paintings and my response paintings at the completion of the process. Sarah reported, "I appreciated my time with the paint. I feel uplifted and even more content." This was a shared experience, one reported it was like seeing a "pond reflection" when viewing her paintings and my response paintings. An additional participant reported she was grateful to have someone honor her paintings by creating response paintings.

Figure 12. "Pond reflection." Participant painting on left and response painting on right

Felt Seen. All reported they felt seen and that the essence of their paintings were captured in the response paintings and expressed gratitude for this process. One shared that it was like someone had walked through her shoes visually, which was something she had never experienced. She shared it felt foreign but validating.

As a result of being witnessed, the participants had an increase in confidence and self-satisfaction, enjoyed the process, and felt seen. For myself, the witnessing of this painting process was a large part of the research and helped to materialize the outcomes. It was always present during the painting sessions and following the sessions in review of the video footage, paintings, and writings and creation of embodied response paintings.

Witnessing

In witnessing the paintings being created, my body slowed, grounded, and was more connected. This process happened both in the live viewing of the paintings being created and in reviewing the footage of the sessions. I breathed and settled as I witnessed the creations being birthed. I watched the brushstrokes in anticipation of what would happen next with the paint. I watched to see which paint colors would be selected, how the body moved, and what paint bristles would apply paint onto the canvas/board. It was exciting and so engaging. There was also a level of attunement that I felt to each participant. I could feel what they felt as they created. I could feel when they were anxious or tense, I would take a breath when they breathed, I could feel when they settled, etc. Below is an excerpt from my journal and am example of engaging with the proprioceptive sense, as I was witnessing:

> I hold my breath for her but then force myself to breathe and in that process my body calms and slows and attunes to the brushstrokes. There is something in the holding, release, and attunement. My body slows down as I watch.

Additionally, my head would move in the direction of the brushstrokes, both in watching the moment to moment painting and in reviewing the footage. For instance, when the brush would move to the right, my head would move to the right, and when the brush would move to the left, my head would also move to the left. Due to the depth and intimacy of my witnessing and

responding, I knew that my response pieces needed to hold the depth and breadth of each session and chose to create embodied response paintings to have a greater understanding of the effects of the slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements and the pauses.

Embodied Response Paintings. The embodied response paintings were rooted in my role as the witness, how the participant experienced this process, and how I mirrored the participant's experience of this process. I first compiled what I learned by doing the following: watching the painting movements live and through the camera lens during the painting sessions, reviewing the footage of the painting sessions and creating edited videos, reading the participant writings, and closely reviewing their paintings. After completing this process and following each participant painting session, while alone, I created the embodied response painting. I paused every 5-10 minutes while creating the response painting and viewed footage of the participant's painting session, on my computer, to hone in on mirroring specific movements. I also re-read some of the notes I took on the painting session and deeply looked at the participant paintings during this pause before returning to painting. The focus was on the participant and their experiences of these movements as guided by the research question. I used similar movements of my body, replicating the tensing of the body, holding of the breath, settling of the body, and release of the breath. The response paintings were an embodiment of the participants' movements and creations with my own personal twist and artistic interpretation.

These paintings were a mirroring, embodying, and a deepening. Creating embodied response paintings in this way was different than what I had been taught about creating response artwork and it felt foreign in some ways but it was important to respond in this way in order to closely adhere to the participants' experiences of these movements. I could have used free expression and more organically responded to the participant paintings but wanted to try

something different and take a deep focus on the movements through the mirroring of movements. Both ways to create response artwork, whether free expression or mirroring, are valid processes but for the purposes of this research, I chose to mirror the movements created by the participants in the embodied response paintings. Guided by the research question, I was curious to find out more about what it was like for the participants to engage with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements. For myself, using these types of movements and exaggerating the slowness of these movements was challenging. It was not necessarily challenging to replicate the brushstrokes using similar movements and colors but it was challenging to use the movements in general. At times, I wanted to speed up or rest my arm and shoulder, much like the participants but I stayed with the process and honored the participant paintings in the embodied response paintings. Below is an excerpt from my painting journal in regards to creating an embodied response painting:

> I could feel my muscles as I moved, swayed. I could really feel my body, my gut, and my feet. I almost felt intoxicated, super slowed and I felt like I needed to hurry up and finish. It was hard to go slow. I would speed up, breathe, and then slow down.

Figure 13. Participant painting on left and embodied response painting on right

It was a very intimate process to create embodied response paintings and helped to go even deeper into this inquiry to understand the effects of slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements and the pauses used throughout this process. I needed to recreate paintings in this way to have an embodied knowing of what it was like for participants to paint using slow, gentle, and repetitive movements. The paintings were a deepening and a mirroring that fueled the participants' experiences of feeling seen, witnessed, and embodied. It was a way for my body to understand what my mind was trying to figure out and it was a gentle way to honor the participants and their creations. In some ways, I feel my body has a greater understanding of this process than my mind because the slow, gentle and repetitive movements and the pause are so connected to the body. Using these movements created a parallel process for the body to also slow which is visually captured in the embodied response paintings.

After creating the embodied response paintings, the paintings were shared alongside the participant paintings in the final session for each individual. The participant paintings were placed along the wall in chronological order from time of creation and the corresponding response painting was placed next to each of these paintings. After viewing the paintings in this way and reflecting, there was a report of the following: Liz shared, "I feel like you see me and have walked in my shoes visually," Katelyn shared, "I can feel the gentleness radiating onto us from the pieces," Carla shared, "It was cool to see the response paintings and how they communicated with each other. My eyes kept darting between my paintings and your paintings," Sarah shared, "It is a little weird but also interesting. No one has ever responded to my artwork in this way," and Jacquie shared, "I am grateful to have someone honor my paintings with a response painting and that you were able to capture the essence of my paintings." Overall, all felt

that the response paintings honored the painting process and replicated their paintings in a gentle and holding manner.

Creating the embodied response paintings was a bodily way to hold and express what was witnessed during the slow, gentle and repetitive painting movement process that was explored in this art-based inquiry. Creating these response paintings was an integral component of my role as the witness and validated that all felt seen. I chose to use a mirroring of movements in the embodied response painting for the purposes of this research but am open to all types of ways to respond to artwork, including free expression.

The roles of witnessing and being witnessed allowed for a deepening into the art-based inquiry and provided a container for the outcomes to materialize. It was a necessary outcome that I had not anticipated would play such an integral role in this research. The gentle role of the witness is strongly connected to the first four outcomes: challenging to paint slowly, increased present moment awareness and immersion, induced a meditative painting state, and increased connection to self and embodiment. The sixth and final outcome is interwoven throughout the first five outcomes and was necessary in order to truly explore this art-based inquiry and to materialize the outcomes, it is the refinement of methods.

Outcome Six: Refinement of Methods

In conducting this research, the methods evolved and changed over time as a result of the reflective research process and in consultation with my advisor.

Reflective Research Process

The outcomes of this research emerged as a result of the following reflective research process: viewing the artwork being created live, watching the video footage, reviewing the participant writings and paintings, creating embodied response paintings and writings, reviewing

the video footage, creating an edited video for each participant and one edited video summarizing the entirety of the research outcomes, viewing the respective edited video with each participant, viewing the paintings and response paintings, consultation with my advisor, and the writing of the dissertation. This process of looking and relooking in many different ways is the reflective research process. It was a way to closely look at what happened as a result of using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements and the pause, and to have an understanding of what happened. The looking and relooking at the process and products emerging, allowed for myself and my advisor to see clearly what changes needed to be made to the methods in order to optimize the materialization of outcomes.

Summary of Changes to the Methods

The significant changes to the methods that were made over the course of the art-based inquiry, include the following: all stood while painting, there was silence during the painting sessions, 30” x 40” Bristol board was used for the painting surface, gentle prompts were given to slow down painting movements when warranted and there was a brief movement warm-up prior to painting. These changes are detailed more fully below.

Standing While Painting. Standing while painting, was a significant change to the methods. Liz chose to sit while painting and this appeared to limit her range of motion and engagement with the painting process. The four remaining participants stood while painting and I stood while creating my embodied response paintings. Standing at an easel while painting increased the range of painting motion, all could move more and their bodies could extend more over the painting surface. Sarah and Jacquie both shared that standing allowed for them to “dance” with the paintings. There was a report that standing made all pause more and step away

from the paintings at times which helped with assimilation. Standing took more energy and was like a workout but was warranted by the process.

30” x 40” White Bristol Board. The first participant painted on 16” x 20” white canvas, it became apparent that this size was not large enough to explore the inquiry. After consultation with my advisor, I increased the size of the canvas to 18” x 24” for the second participant and found that this was still not large enough to accurately explore the inquiry. For the remaining participants, the size of the painting surface was increased to 30” x 40” white Bristol board. The large Bristol board encouraged all to not focus on filling up the entire piece of paper, to not have a plan, and to instead focus on moment to moment painting. As a result, little paintings were created within larger paintings. The large size also encouraged a slowing down and provided more room to move and paint. Carla shared, “If it was a small surface, it would be really hard to do, I would be paralyzed.” Sarah shared that the larger paper was better because it increased the “sensory component” of the process. Jacquie shared that she enjoyed the “negative space of the large paper” and it was “more freeing.” The larger paper size maximized the impact of using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements paired with the pause.

Silence While Painting. An additional change to the methods included having silence during the painting process. The first two participants and I casually engaged in conversation which appeared to distract or pull away from the painting process. The following participants engaged with the inquiry in silence and were more focused on the paintings as a result. The deep focusing needed for painting in this way required silence.

Gentle Prompts to Slow Down Painting Movements. I began gently reminding all to use the slow, gentle and repetitive movements, when they were painting with fast or pressured strokes. The first participant was naturally a fast painter and I did not want to limit the types of

movements she was using but as a result of not gently coaching her, there were limited slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements. I prompted all of the remaining participants when their strokes became too fast or pressured which greatly helped with exploration of the inquiry. After reminding all once or twice, they no longer needed to be prompted and sunk into the flow of using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements on their own.

Brief Movement Warmup Prior to Painting. After transitioning to the 30" x 40" Bristol board, I began having participants do a brief movement warmup prior to painting. Many were intimidated by the size of the painting surface and appreciated a gentle warmup. Prior to engaging in the movement warmup, participants paused and grounded their energy and body to connect with the earth. They then held a paintbrush, with no paint on the brush, over the Bristol board and would reach and extend repetitively over the surface, practicing slow, gentle and repetitive movements. The gentle warmup relaxed all and prepared them to paint in this way.

Using the reflective research process allowed for my advisor and me to closely examine the methods and make needed changes in order to deeply explore the effects on the participants' of using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements and pauses throughout this painting process. Without these changes, I am not certain the other outcomes would have materialized. The refinement of the methods has become a core outcome of this research.

Summary of Outcomes

The effects on the participants of using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements and the pauses used during this process, yielded the following outcomes: it was challenging to paint slowly, there was an increased connection to present moment awareness and immersion, a meditative painting state was induced, there was an increased connection to self and

embodiment, the role of the witness and being witnessed was significant, and the refinement of methods allowed for an accurate exploration of the art-based inquiry.

Challenging to Paint Slowly

It was overwhelming at first to use slow movements. There was also a tension between wanting to be done or finished and going slow. There was a report that it was challenging to go slow, “like a work-out,” and hard to hold the hand and arm up for extended periods of time.

Increased Present Moment Awareness and Immersion

Creating in this way was very much a moment to moment process. There was a deep focusing on the parts of the painting being created in the moment and not on the entire composition. This focusing increased connection to self, mind and body, and the moment, it also relieved overwhelm and conscious thoughts were quieted.

Increased Connection to Self and Embodiment

The whole body painted, not just the hand or the arm, but the entire body painted. The slower the movements, the more embodied and present one became. Using paint was a sensory stimulating and containing way to exaggerate the slowing down and increased the sensory experience and connection to self.

Induced a Meditative Painting State

The rhythm of the slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements and the deep focusing during the process, induced a meditative painting state. Participants reported it was a spiritual experience and there was a sense of timelessness while creating. The slow, gentle and repetitive movements became a movement mantra for creating in this way.

Being Witnessed and Witnessing

In being witnessed, participants reported they felt seen, the essential qualities of their paintings were captured in the response paintings, they had increased confidence and self-satisfaction, and enjoyed the process. In witnessing the paintings being created, there was a level of attunement that I felt to each participant. To honor this attunement and more fully understand the process, I created embodied response paintings.

Refinement of Methods

The methods evolved and changed as a result of the reflective research process and in consultation with my advisor. Significant changes to the methods included the following: all stood while painting, 30” x 40” Bristol board was used for the painting surface, silence during the painting process, gentle prompts to slow down painting when warranted, and a brief movement warmup prior to painting. These changes were necessary in order to maximize the generation of outcomes. The outcomes will more fully be explored in the following chapter in relation to the existing literature connected to slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, and the pauses used during this process.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This chapter explores slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, and the pause, and their connection to the existing literature, limitations of this research, and implications for the field of art therapy and future research.

The Aesthetics of Movement: A Contemplative, Sensory Painting Process

Painting with slow, gentle and repetitive movements, was a contemplative, sensory painting process that involved both a slowing down and a deep focus on the moment to moment movements and application of paint onto the painting surface. There was not a focus on the representation or subject matter of the painting, or meaning making, but a direct focus on the body and movements being used while creating. This was very different than much of the art therapy research I found connected to this inquiry; for instance, the empirical studies were goal directed, tended to lean on the subject matter of the images created, and focused on how the brain was affected (Elliott, 2008; Homer, 2015; Tobin, 2006; Tripp, 2007, 2016; Urhausen, 2015). I was surprised by the lack of literature and research that exists in connection to the body and art making. Creating artwork is inherently a sensory experience and the body is such a large part of the creating process, we need our body to create. The body is of course connected to the brain and the brain is an important component of the creative process but it is only one piece of the puzzle.

In addition to focusing on the brain, there was also a focus on the subject matter of the artwork in the existing research and there was limited focus on the movements used to create artwork. Tripp (2007, 2016) was one of the few art therapists that has written about using a specific movement sequence in artmaking, specifically bilateral movements without necessarily

focusing on subject matter. She found this to be helpful in the remediation of trauma. Elbrecht (2018), an additional art therapist that has written about movements in connection to artmaking, has written about a sensorimotor approach to artmaking that involves rhythmic bilateral creating with both the left hand and the right hand, at the same time, in order to restore the flow of energy in the body, release tension and take a bottom up approach to remediating trauma. She has clients use oil pastels, chalk pastels, or finger paints, to engage the body in movement and access the sensory while creating.

A focus on the movements being used to create is another way to connect to healing, especially when there are so many things that we cannot cognitively figure out or work through. In using slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, the participants were able to connect to the present moment and increase connection to the body and self. These types of connection are necessary for healing. Sometimes, we have to look to the body and listen to what the body is saying through movement in order to access healing. We cannot only look to the brain, psychological processes, subject matter of artwork, and meaning making. There is a large gap in the art therapy research literature in relation to the body, painting with specific movements, and the effects of these movements. The specific movements of slow, gentle and repetitive, will be explored more closely in the existing body of literature below.

Slow, Gentle and Repetitive Painting Movements

Slow. When engaged in a contemplative practice, a slowing down is warranted. When we slow down, we see more and increase access to healing, embodiment and the present moment (Franklin, 2017; Hanh, 1991, 2014). A significant outcome of this research was that it was challenging to paint slowly. I did not find any research that specifically addressed intentionally painting slowly but did find some pieces that spoke to art making and repetition that can also be

applied to the discomfort that can come with painting slowly. For instance, Franklin (2017) wrote of returning to the media over and over and creating an image or object repetitively until the message was received and Isis (2014) wrote of staying with repetition in art making until relief and respite surfaced. Similar to mindfulness meditation, there was a gentle return to the painting brushstroke over and over and thus the present moment despite the mind wandering, body fatiguing or being uncomfortable (Franklin, 2017; Goyal et. al., 2014; Isis, 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2005). It was important to stay with the stroke to yield assimilation and flow.

When engaged with the slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, the participants were more focused and intentional with movements and became more embodied and connected to the felt sense (Gendlin, 1981a; Slingerland, 2014). They were able to connect with the creative source (Allen, 1995a, 1995b) and the flow of energy or wu-wei (Slingerland, 2003), reporting that the painting movements felt like "tai chi." Similar to chigong or tai chi chuan, moving in this way influenced the flow of ch'i in the body and breath, had meditative elements, increased present moment awareness and immersion and brought some relief. The movements were slow, intentional, involved deep and rhythmic breathing and a calming of the mind which led to embodiment. When the participants slowed down, they were able to make shifts and go deeper (Hanh, 1991).

Gentle. It was important for gentleness to be a part of this painting movement process, it is the softness or gentleness in art making that can lead to an opening for healing (Rogers, 1993). A softness allows for one to see with the heart and the great depth of the heart center (Richards, 1989). The gentleness held this painting process and influenced the participants' ability to connect with the present moment, embodiment, a meditative painting state and the witness

process. Had fast painting strokes been used, it may have been more challenging to connect with a meditative painting state or the present moment.

Repetitive. This research built on the existing literature and its intersections with the use of repetition. The most salient repetitive practices/processes in connection to this research were: movement mantras (Franklin, 2017), centering (Richards, 1989), repetitive processes of the body (Hanh, 2015; Levine, 1997) and repetition and running (Dreyer & Dreyer, 2004; Shapiro, 2009).

Movement Mantras. The use of a mantra is a sacred practice that can bring a sense of safety and calmness to the mind and body by repeating a sound, gesture, or image. Creating artwork over and over is an art-based form of mantra repetition that leads to increased attunement and depth (Franklin, 2017). The slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements became a movement mantra for the participants. This sustained gesture allowed for a meditative painting state to be induced, a connection to the present moment, and an increased connection to self and embodiment. It was something that the participants constantly engaged with during the painting sessions and became an anchor for this process. There was not a great deal of research that addressed movement mantras, especially in artmaking. Franklin was one of the few to discuss movement mantras, the research mostly spoke to the repetition of sound in mantra practice. The field of art therapy would benefit from exploring movement mantras in the context of artmaking and how these movement sequences can bridge connection to attunement, healing and depth. A specific type of movement mantra is the concept of centering, which also greatly informed this painting process.

Centering. Centering involves a sacred focus on the artmaking and manipulation of art media in the present moment in a repetitive fashion, which increases connection between body and mind and allows one to access the felt sense. It allows the artist to see and learn with one's

hands and heart and is a repetitive engagement with experience in the present moment (Richards, 1989). Richards used the concept of centering in relation to pottery but it is also applicable to the painting process used in this research. The participants repetitively used specific movements with their hands, arms, and shoulders, which influenced an increase in connection to the present moment, induced a meditative painting state, and increased connection to self and embodiment. The movement sequence created a rhythm that held the participants and the process. It was a constant, gentle engagement with the paint, paintbrush and painting surface. Centering is a repetitive, conscious bodily practice, that is fueled by many unconscious, repetitive bodily processes that are briefly explored below.

Repetitive Processes of the Body. The body runs on repetition and is constantly moving, even when one is sitting, the heart is beating, blood is running through the veins, and the lungs are breathing (Hanh, 2015). The body can be loud and communicate distress but often times it is quietly running on repetition, with many autonomic processes that are not in conscious awareness (Levine, 1997). Painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements had a rhythm that mirrored autonomic bodily processes such as the rise and fall of the lungs and the beat of the heart. This rhythm may have helped to connect with the present moment, the meditative painting state, and increase connection to self and embodiment. While there are many unconscious, repetitive bodily processes that occur, there are also numerous conscious repetitive movements that engage the body, one example that greatly informed this research was running.

Repetition and Running. In running, the repetition and gentleness of the feet connecting with the earth over and over can cause a felt shift or release in the body and bridge connection to mind, body, spirit and/or the present moment (Dreyer & Dreyer, 2004; Shapiro, 2009). It is a meditative, sensory experience that involves the whole body, much like art making. As the brush

connected with the Bristol board or canvas over and over, it was similar to the feet gently connecting with the earth over and over in running. Even when fatigue or pain entered for the participants, the strokes endured much like the strides endure for a runner. Painting in this way was a physical act that caused many shifts in the body, bridged connection to the present moment, induced a meditative state and increased connection to the body. It would be interesting to pair running with art making in future research studies; the two greatly complement and connect with one another, especially in the context of this research. Literature on repetition was also explored in relation to contemplative practices, which greatly informed this research and is outlined below.

Contemplative Practices: An Exploration of Slowing Down and Going Deeper

The contemplative practices of mindfulness, mindfulness meditation, meditation and breath were very much present in this research. At first, I was surprised by how present these practices were in this research, that was not my intention when developing the research methodology and yet they naturally emerged. The process of painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, paired with the pause, became a contemplative, sensory practice as we went deeper into the research. These practices and their connections to this research are discussed below.

Mindfulness. Participants were more awake to the present moment, had heightened awareness and focus, and were present and connected to their surroundings in the moment (Hanh, 2015). Painting in this way safely connected with the senses: visual, tactile, proprioceptive, olfactory, and auditory, which mindfully brought the participants to the present moment and embodiment (Isis, 2014; Malchiodi, 2018). The concept of creating artwork to engage with the present moment is not a new concept and has been used in the treatment of

cancer (Luzzatto et al., 2014; Peterson, 2014), chronic pain (Fritsche, 2014), trauma (Tantia, 2014), anger (Gluck, 2014), substance dependence (Van Dort & Grocke, 2014), and mental illness (Herring, 2014).

Meditation. Painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements had elements of both mindfulness meditation (Hanh, 1991; Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and concentrative meditation (Franklin, 2017). The participants were brought back to the present moment again and again due to engagement with the movements and heightened focus on the paint being applied to the Bristol board or canvas. It was the sustained, repetitive gesture that generated shifts in experience and within the body. The movements led to an increase in attunement and depth that led to a meditative painting state, increased connection to self and embodiment, and increased connection to present moment awareness and immersion. Furthermore, Franklin (1999) wrote that it was necessary for meditation to happen in silence. I quickly learned that painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, required silence after engaging in casual conversation with the first two participants. The chatter pulled away from the process, the moment and the body. All remaining participants engaged with this process in silence, it was necessary to connect with the depth of the outcomes.

Breath. In addition to the brushstrokes being an anchor to the present moment, the breath was also an anchor (Franklin, 2017). Engaging with breath while painting with slow, gentle and repetitive movements, facilitated a softening of the body, a physical lowering of the shoulders, and a settling and connection to the earth (Hanh, 2014). With every exhale, the participants became more present, embodied and connected to the moment.

Engagement with the Sensory: Felt-Sense and Embodiment

The process of standing and painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements fostered a connection to the sensory and the felt sense whether the participant wanted to be connected to the body or not (Gendlin, 1981a, 1981b, 2012). When one is standing, as opposed to sitting, there is an increased engagement with the body, sensory, muscles, bones, and fascia, in order to hold the body upright. There is also a greater range of motion when one is standing, the arms, shoulders, back, stomach, and legs, can move more freely which was necessary for this process. I am grateful to my advisor for encouraging me to have all stand while engaged in this painting process. He reminded me that we need to stand in order to have an increased range of motion and connection to the earth and body.

Additionally, the slowness of the brushstroke paired with gentleness and repetition of the brushstroke, opened the door to access the felt sense and a deep form of embodiment through the interoceptive and exteroceptive senses (Malchiodi, 2018, 2020). It was a way to access where the comfortable and uncomfortable sensations were in the body and also where support was needed in the body (Levine, 2010). At times it was uncomfortable to be connected to the body, some were having physical pain and others emotional pain that they could not avoid connecting with when engaged in this process. It was through connecting with the felt sense, oftentimes unknowingly, that the participants were able to increase connection to self and embodiment and present moment awareness and immersion.

Painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements was a contemplative, sensory painting process that had many layers and built upon the existing pool of literature on repetition, gentleness and art making, contemplative practice, the felt sense and embodiment. A

significant outcome of this research was the witness; a form of witnessing was the creation of embodied response paintings which is discussed more fully below.

Embodied Response Painting as Mirroring. Looking to the literature in relation to the embodied response paintings, I could not find literature that discussed response artwork in quite this way. In general, the literature spoke to art therapists creating response artwork in response to the client and/or artwork that had been created by the client as a way of deepening the witnessing experience (Fish, 2012; Jones, 1983; Moon, 1999). Or, the art therapist created artwork alongside the client to build relationship, visual communication, containment and empathy in session (Fish, 2006, 2012, 2017, 2019; Franklin, 1990, 1999, 2010a, 2010b; Moon, 1999; Rubin, 2001), or after the session, to increase understanding and empathy towards the client (Wadeson, 2003; Fish, 2012). However, I was able to find literature that spoke to response artwork as a way to mirror a client's creation, similar to the role of active listening used by the talk therapist (Fish, 2019). This visual mirroring of imagery is a way to engage all of the senses and can be applied to the embodied response painting. Additionally, creating response artwork in this way made use of kinesthetic empathy or "feeling into the experience of another" (N. J. Cardillo, personal communication, March 26, 2020). As I created the response paintings, I truly felt into the experience of each participant and was very intentional and thoughtful in regards to how I created the embodied response paintings. The paintings captured the depth of what was created by each participant, were rooted in my role as the witness, how the participant experienced this process and how I mirrored the participant's experience of this process.

I could have created response paintings that did not mirror the creations of the participants or did not use similar colors, I could have created paintings that were more free expression and organic but as guided by the research question, I desired to take a deep focus on

the participants' experience of these movements and create the embodied response painting. Creating the embodied response allowed for me to focus on the body, movements, and the participants' experience of the movements and not necessarily focus on the subject matter of the artwork. The embodied response is a deepening and a mirroring that fueled the participants' experiences of feeling seen, witnessed, and embodied (Allen, 1995a). While all forms of response artwork are valid, creating embodied response artwork could be a different way for art therapists to respond to their clients and artwork created by their clients. It is a different way of knowing.

Implications, Questions, and Future Research

Painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements, paired with the pause, yielded several outcomes that can influence healing and the greater art therapy community, such as: an increase in connection to present moment awareness and immersion, induced a meditative painting state, increased connection to self and embodiment, and the role of the witness and being witnessed was significant. In reflecting on the outcomes and the literature, I have developed questions related to methodology and questions that may be future research questions. My hope is that these questions fuel or inspire additional research conducted to this painting movement sequence and the body. Questions I have related to methodology include:

- How would it have been different had I made art alongside the participants? Would this have shifted the witness process? What would have happened had we created together on the same surface?
- How would it have been different had I not created embodied response paintings and created response paintings instead, ones that were not a mirroring but more an organic, imaging it further, personal response?

- What would be the effects of using other movements in art making?

Potential research questions include the following:

- How was the researcher impacted by slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements and the pause?
- Can painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements restore disrupted rhythms in the body? What are the physiological impacts of slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements?
- Can painting with slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements impact healing without a focus on representation or particular subject matter?

I believe there is a strong implication for this research to influence how we view the body and healing. For instance, painting with slow, gentle and repetitive movements very much simulated the rhythmic repetition of the autonomic nervous system, the pulse generated by the heart and the rise and fall of the lungs. When one is connected to the natural rhythms of the body, one has access to healing and equilibrium (Chaiklin, 2016; Kossak, 2015). It was through painting in this way that the participants were able to safely bridge connection to the body. When one has slowed down, is mindfully present in the moment and embodied, high level healing and transformation can occur (Hanh, 2014, 2015; Gendlin, 1981a; Levine, 1997, 2010). There is a great opportunity for art therapists and art-based researchers to more fully explore this painting movement process in relation to the body and healing.

Limitations

Limitations of the research included the following: I did not follow up with the participants to determine if there were any long-term effects, the research was conducted over a

short period of time, the research was conducted with experts and able-bodied individuals and was a homogenous sample.

Lack of Follow Up

I did not reach out following the completion of the painting sessions. I am curious to know if there were any long-term effects after engaging with this painting process. For instance, were participants able to be more present in the moment on a regular basis, were they more perceptive of surroundings, did they slow down in other areas of their lives, etc. I believe this research could benefit from a more longitudinal art-based design and follow up.

Time Constraints

This research consisted of four, 90 minutes, painting sessions over the course of a two-month period. For the second participant, I added additional painting sessions and did not notice much of a difference in terms of ability to engage with the inquiry; however, I would be interested to see what the effects would be if engaged with this inquiry over a longer period of time.

Sample

While there were many strengths that came along with the participants I selected to help me explore the inquiry, there were also some potential limitations, such as: they were experts, able-bodied and were a relatively homogenous sample.

Experts. All that participated in the inquiry were art therapists and had some level of skill and knowledge of acrylic painting, experiences in self-exploration and being able to be in the present moment. This helped to expedite the flow of the research process, decrease the possibility of attrition, understand the implications of the research questions, and reflect upon the experimental activities. That said, I am not sure if the outcomes of the study will also be

generalizable to the non-art therapist, thus opening the door to future research opportunities with non-art therapists.

Able-bodied. All were able to stand and paint and were able to move all parts of their bodies. Conducting research in this manner could be a limitation for those that have paralysis, are not able to move certain parts of their bodies, or are not able to stand for 30 minutes or longer. Methodology would need to be altered to meet the needs of these individuals should they engage with the inquiry in future studies.

Homogenous. The five participants used for the study were all Caucasian females, had graduate degrees and were of the middle class. There was an age range from 20s-50s. There is a need for additional studies to explore this inquiry with more diverse samples.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Art-based research provided a depth and a capturing of wholeness to the exploration of slow, gentle and repetitive painting movements and the pause; it brought access to equilibrium and healing. This was a contemplative, sensory painting process that slowed the participants down and brought time to focus on moment to moment painting and nothing else. There was not a focus on representation or subject matter of the paintings but on the movements and the sensory engagement and stimulation as the paint was applied to the Bristol board or canvas. The body and mind settled, aches and pains were quieted or released, breath became deep and rhythmic and the whole self was brought into the present moment and embodied.

There are opportunities for art therapy researchers to explore how the body and healing can be impacted by specific movements in art making. Future research is warranted to fill the gap in art therapy research literature related to the body, specific movements in art making, and healing.

APPENDIX A

LESLEY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

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Institutional Review Board

DATE: 8/2/2018

To: Melissa Hedlund Nelson

From: Dr. Robyn Flaum Cruz & Dr. Ulas Kaplan, Co-Chairs, Lesley IRB

RE: **IRB Number: 17/18 -060**

The application for the research project, "An Exploration of Movements in Art Therapy: Slow, Gentle, and Repetitive Movements in Painting" provides a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the method of the proposed research, the protection of participants' identities and the confidentiality of the data collected. The consent form is sufficient to ensure voluntary participation in the study and contains the appropriate contact information for the researcher and the IRB.

This application is approved for one calendar year from the date of approval.

You may conduct this project.

Date of approval of application: 7/27/2018

Investigators shall immediately suspend an inquiry if they observe an adverse change in the health or behavior of a subject that may be attributable to the research. They shall promptly report the circumstances to the IRB. They shall not resume the use of human subjects without the approval of the IRB.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

An Exploration of Movements in Art Therapy:

Slow, Gentle, and Repetitive Movements in Painting

Faculty Supervisor (principal investigator): Dr. Shaun McNiff, University Professor

Researcher: Melissa Hedlund Nelson

Participants are being asked to volunteer in this study to assist with the researcher's doctoral research on *slow, gentle, and repetitive movements in painting*. The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of using slow, gentle, and repetitive painting movements with acrylic paints on canvas and to explore the pause taken before, during, and after, this painting process.

At the initial session, the participant will be briefly interviewed about demographic information and their profession. The participant will participate in four, 90-minute long sessions, that will include three art making sessions and one summary session. These sessions will be video recorded, a GoPro camera will be worn on the participant's head or attached to a paintbrush during the three artmaking sessions, a camera will be placed on a tripod to record at a distance during all sessions, and a phone camera will be used by the researcher to capture stills during all sessions. The cameras will focus on artmaking and participant hands and arms to maintain anonymity and protect confidentiality. During the artmaking sessions the participant will be asked to paint with slow, gentle, and repetitive movements, complete a written reflection, and verbally process the sessions individually with the researcher. During the final session the participant and researcher will review an edited video of the participant's artmaking sessions, complete a visual and written reflection, and process the sessions individually with the researcher.

Participants will be personally interacting with only the researcher. This research project is anticipated to be finished by approximately May, 2019.

I, _____, consent to participate in *the researcher's research study*.

I understand that:

- I am a participant in this inquiry.
- I am volunteering for four, 90-minute sessions. Three sessions will include painting and writing and one session will include viewing an edited video, painting, and writing.
- The sessions will include discussion about the artmaking process.

- Sessions will be video recorded; the artmaking sessions will include a GoPro attached to my head or paintbrush, a camera on a tripod recording at a distance, and the researcher's phone camera
- If I choose to remain anonymous, my identity will be protected.
- Session materials, including: painting, writings, photos, and video, will be kept confidential and used anonymously only, for purposes of supervision, presentation, and/or publication.
- The video recordings, photos, and writings will be kept in a password protected file in the researcher's possession. The artwork created with be kept in the researcher's possession in a locked room.
- The sessions may bring up feelings, thoughts, memories, and physical sensations. Therefore, possible emotional reactions are to be expected; however, I am free to end the session at any time. If I find that I have severe distress, I will be provided with resources and referrals to assist me, and will not lose any benefits that I might otherwise gain by staying in the study.
- I understand that these sessions are not art therapy.
- This study may not provide any benefits to me; however, I may experience increased self-knowledge and other personal insights that I may be able to use in my daily life. The results of the study will help to contribute to the art therapy body of research.
- The researcher is ethically bound to report to the appropriate party any criminal intent or potential harm to self that is disclosed.
- I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.
- If I would like, my artwork will be returned to me at the conclusion of the study.
- I will receive a copy of the dissertation.
- If I have any problems or questions, I may contact the researcher at any point at 630-749-8313 or mhedlun2@lesley.edu

Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity:

Participants have the right to remain anonymous. If the participant elects to remain anonymous, the researcher will keep your records private and confidential ***to the extent allowed by law****. The researcher will use pseudonym identifiers rather than participant names on study records. Participant names and other facts that might identify a participant will not appear when the researcher presents this study or publishes its results.*

If for some reason the participant does not wish to remain anonymous, the participant may specifically authorize the use of material that would identify the participant as a participant in the experiment. If a participant would like to be named in the study, please check box below.

☐ *Yes, I would like to be named in the study.*

☐ *No, I would not like to be named in the study.*

You can contact Faculty Supervisor (principal investigator), Dr. Shaun McNiff, at smcniff@lesley.edu with any additional questions. You may also contact the Lesley University Human Subjects Committee Co-Chairs (see below).

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

a) **Researcher's Signature**:

_____

Date Researcher's Signature Print Name

b) **Participant's Signature**:

I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research has been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose, and that the researcher will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.

_____

Date Participant's Signature Print Name

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu

APPENDIX C

LINKS TO EDITED PARTICIPANT VIDEOS AND CULMINATING VIDEO

Edited Video	Link
Liz Video	https://youtu.be/iAIVcztOk1k
Katelyn Video	https://youtu.be/pBACUZwq_EI
Carla Video	https://youtu.be/tQzlLd9Poaw
Sarah Video	https://youtu.be/3UGfvyLzOpo
Jacquie Video	https://youtu.be/IGDtq-3GPEY
Culminating Video	https://youtu.be/F3E_5QiQPsA

Figure 14. Links to edited participant videos and culminating video

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT PAINTINGS AND RESEARCHER EMBODIED RESPONSE PAINTINGS

Figure 15. Liz session one painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 16. Liz session one response painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 17. Liz session two painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 18. Liz session two response painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 19. Liz session three painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 20. Liz session three response painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 21. Liz session four painting, 16” x 20” acrylic on canvas

Figure 22. Katelyn session one painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 23. Katelyn session one response painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 24. Katelyn session two painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 25. Katelyn session two response painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 26. Katelyn session three painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 27. Katelyn session three response painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 28. Katelyn session four painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

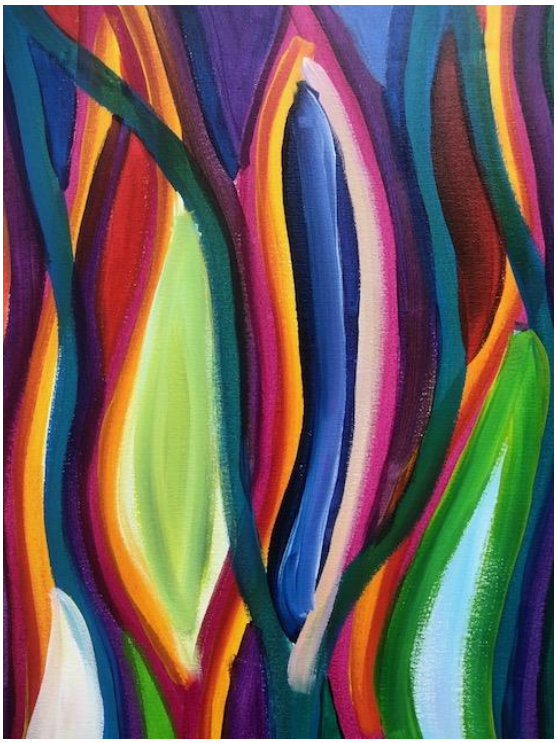

Figure 29. Katelyn session four response painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 30. Katelyn session five painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

Figure 31. Katelyn session five response painting, 18” x 24” acrylic on canvas

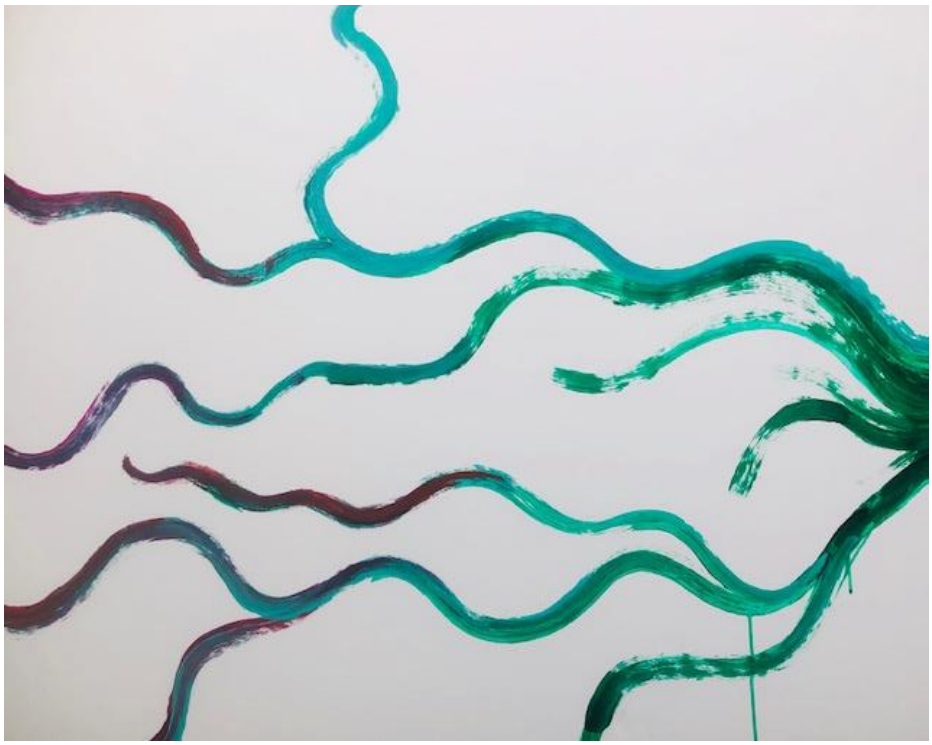

Figure 32. Carla session one painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 33. Carla session one response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 34. Carla session two painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 35. Carla session two response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 36. Carla session three painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 37. Carla session three response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 38. Sarah session one painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 39. Sarah session one response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 40. Sarah session two painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 41. Sarah session two response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 42. Sarah session three painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 43. Sarah session three response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

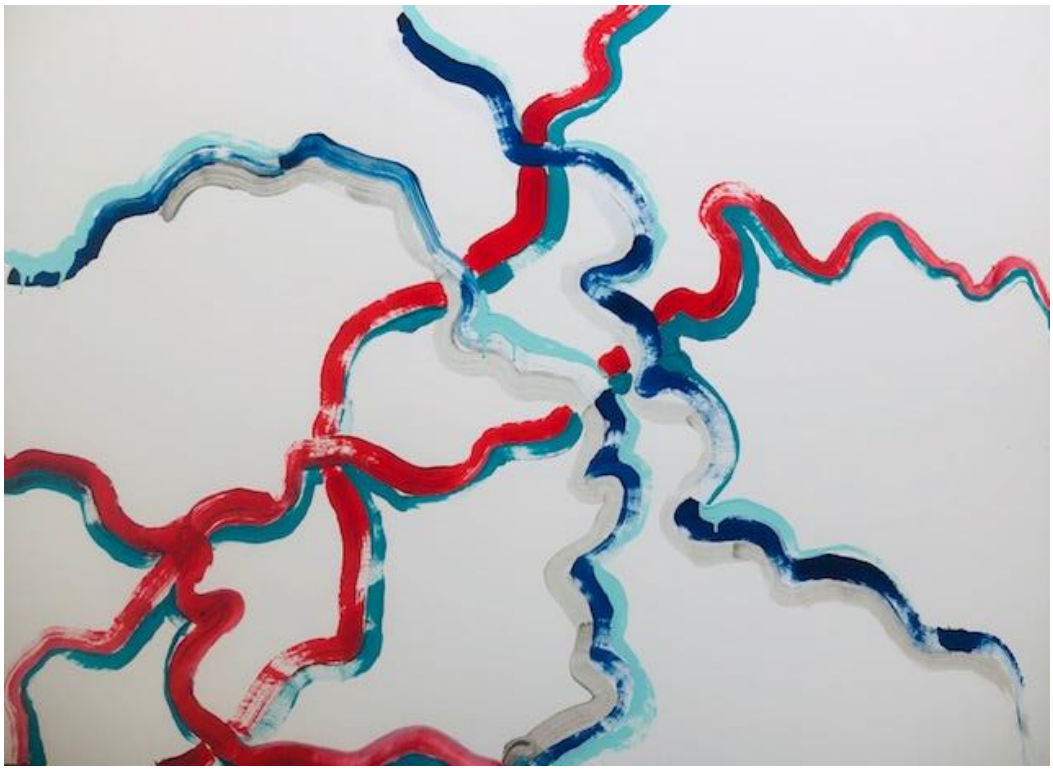

Figure 44. Jacquie session one painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

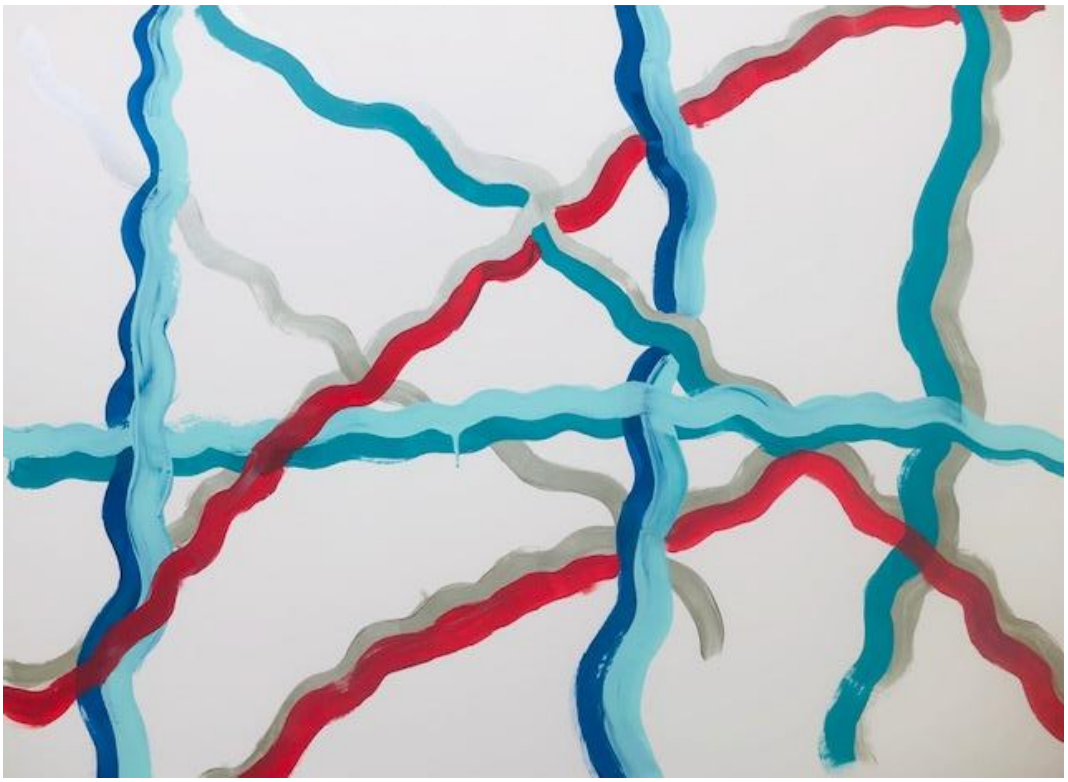

Figure 45. Jacquie session one response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 46. Jacquie session two painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

Figure 47. Jacquie session two response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

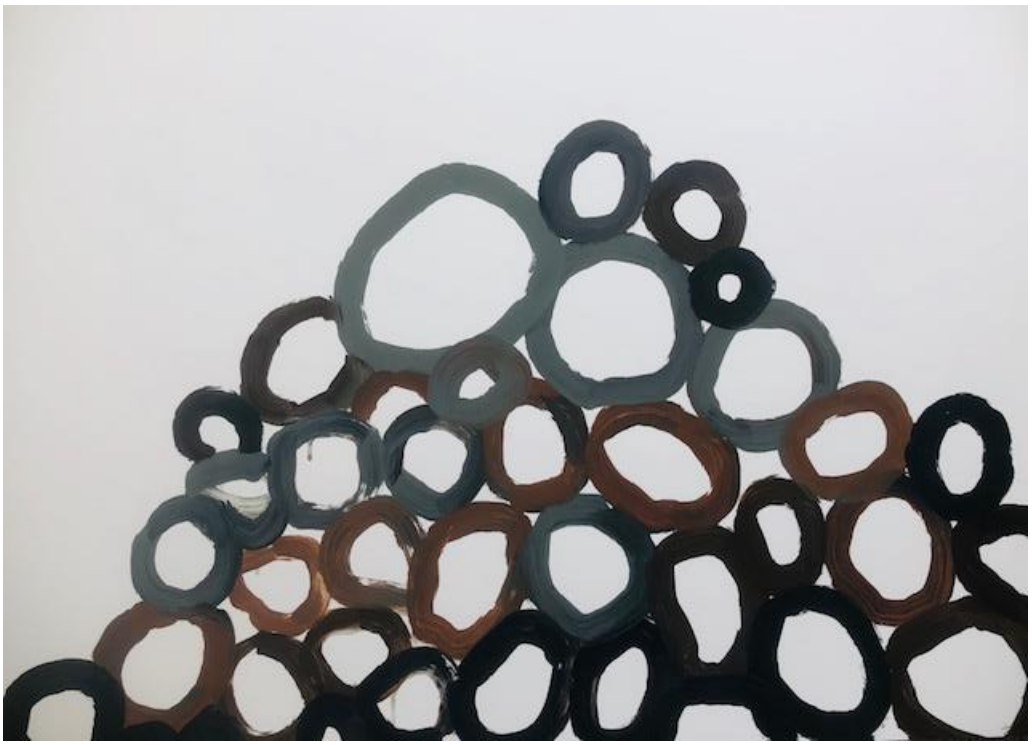

Figure 48. Jacquie session three painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

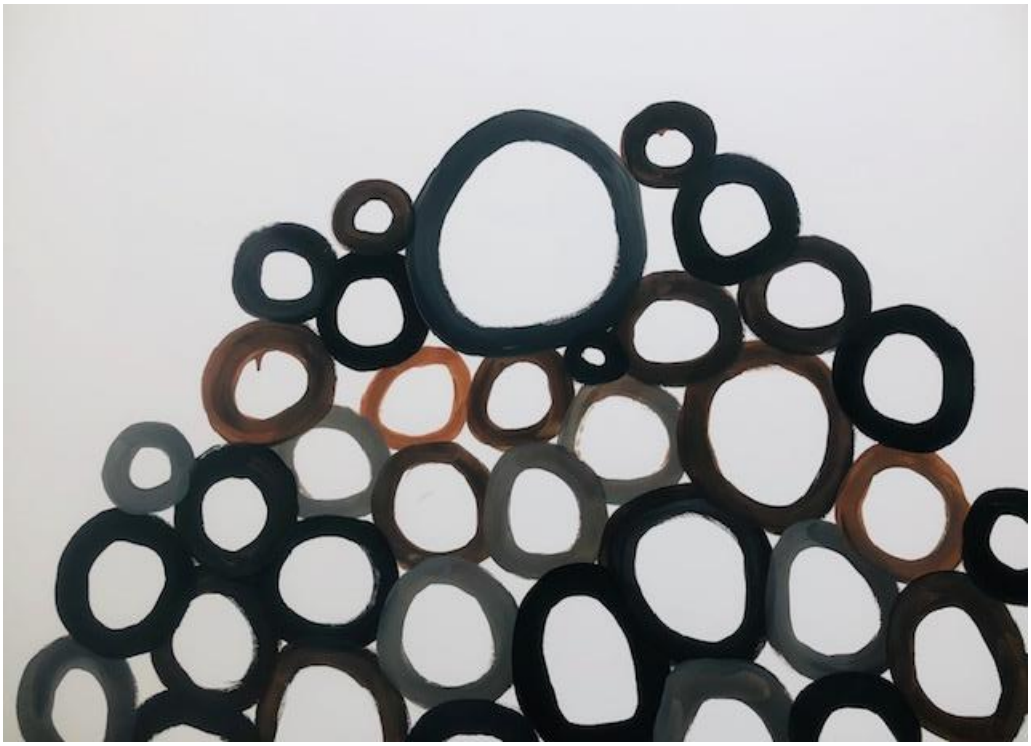

Figure 49. Jacquie session three response painting, 30” x 40” acrylic on Bristol board

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